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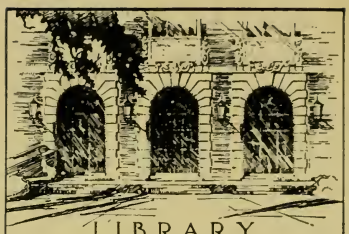

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THE

# MAN WITHOUT A PROFESSION.

VOL. III.

# THE MAN

# WITHOUT A PROFESSION.

BY

CHARLES ROWCROFT,

AUTHOR OF "TALES OF THE COLONIES OR THE ADVENTURES OF AN EMIGRANT."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE

# MAN WITHOUT A PROFESSION.

## CHAPTER I.

"The ancients pictured Fortune with a wheel,
To signify the ever-shifting change
(A nuisance puzzling people a good deal,
When accidents their best-laid plans derange)
Which mortals feel in their uncertain stations;
For when you're at the lowest, something strange,
Beyond all hope of even Fancy's range,
Sometimes starts up, and puts you on full rations—
A moral which gives rise to pleasing contemplations."

"LIFE." *A Poem.*

FOR many days Frank Coverley remained in a state of apathetic despondency. All nature seemed gloomy; life had lost its salt and its savour; and his dark prospects presented one

vast desert without an oasis. It seemed to him that he was a useless log on the ocean of life, drifting he knew not whither. In his despair, he almost lost all care whether he lived or died.

One hope only remained — the hope of again seeing Clara. But he had tried every means that he could devise to discover her, and in vain! And even if he should discover her, what then? He could neither offer her an asylum nor help. But still to see her once more before he died would be a consolation;— but how effect it?

As he sat one morning, in a state of stagnant thought, absorbed in his own wretchedness, he heard the sound of the bells of a church. They began slowly and in a solemn tone; presently they grew quick, and rapidly the sound seemed to be caught up by other bells, till at last an universal peal around him forced his attention. It was a day of public rejoicing; even the street in which he resided was bustling with some excitement. He looked

down, and observed, he thought, more than one little group more gaily dressed than usual. There was a bustle too in the house, indicative of some unusual liveliness.

The ringing of the bells, the shining of the sun, and the general commotion and hilarity around him, struck him in strange contrast with his own loneliness. It irritated him; it was like a mockery of his wretchedness; his misery had gnawed into his soul, and he was angry with mankind for rejoicing while he was miserable.

But the excitement roused him. His little apartment felt close and stifling;—he could not breathe freely in it. There seemed to be an oppression on his chest, and a weight on his brain. His thoughts were thick and turbid; he could not even think freely, cribbed up in that little space;—he determined to go out —somewhere.

For the first time for many days, he dressed himself as he was used to do. Descending the many stairs, he went out into the street. Which

way should he go? Any way; it didn't matter.

He passed down the Strand; there was an aspect of general rejoicing, and a general movement in one direction, which indicated a sight to be seen. He was not in a humour to see sights; and the festive air of the people annoyed him. Every one, except himself, seemed to have some one to speak to—some one to associate with. No one accosted *him;* no one smiled on him. He thought that persons looked at him oddly, and seemed to avoid him; why should they?—but they did. Was it because they instinctively knew that he was poor, and that all things shrunk from one affected with that social leprosy?

He sought refuge in narrow lanes and alleys; but the bells sounded louder in those less frequented haunts; and even in them the spirit of the general joyousness seemed to penetrate. He hastened on, and proceeding at a rapid pace, he found himself suddenly in the neighbourhood of Regent's Park; but that was full of streaming

people. He turned aside, and at last reached open fields; he wandered through them; he felt tired, but the pure air of the country, and the quietness, soothed him. The exercise, too, had done him good, by circulating his blood, and the warming of his animal frame acted beneficially on his mental faculties. There was space before him; there was room to think.

It was one of those mild days of early February, which give a foretaste of spring. He felt cheered, he did not know why; while he was amidst crowds of people, he was angered by their air of happiness; its contrast with his own state was too painful. Now that he was alone, and unobserved, he felt calm; he was no longer insulted by their mocking joyousness. He could commune with himself undisturbed, and hold converse with nature. He began to revive.

His thoughts flowed freely, and again he set himself to work to consider his condition. Was he not a man? Had he not limbs and faculties? Had he not life? Were God's gifts to

be despised? His condition was bad enough; but might it not be worse? He had health, and strength, and youth, and he felt that he had talents:—were health, and strength, and youth, and talents, worth nothing? How many had suffered the extreme of privations, and had arrived at fortune and independence under the most adverse circumstances! Many a gallant soldier in a campaign had been worse off than he was now. He began to be ashamed of his excess of despondency.

But how to get something to do?—that was the question. Without a profession, or any pursuit, how do that which is the first thing indispensable — that which the rich always think so easy to obtain, and which the poor often find so difficult—something to do!

That was a dilemma. Well—if he could not procure the means of subsistence by the help of others, could he not help himself? He had been accustomed, when a boy, to write little pieces of poetry; they had been much praised at that time. Perhaps he could write

now. Versification, he had heard said by his old tutor, was an art like swimming—once learnt, never forgotten; why could not he write? Or, if not poetry, something? He had read many articles in magazines which he thought poor stuff; and it was hard if he couldn't do better than that. Why shouldn't he try? He should be no worse off if he failed; a little mortification, perhaps; but nothing is to be obtained without some labour and some risk. And then, if he should succeed, and be a successful author! And Clara!—By-the-bye, how was it, he wondered, that he had never thought of putting an advertisement in the newspapers, stating that, if any relation of the late Mr. Lesley would apply, &c. How was it that he could have overlooked that chance of discovering Miss Lesley? This last thought inspired him with new hope. He would set about it directly.

He had been wandering, during these reflections, over the fields, till he had penetrated a considerable distance into the country; and

without being conscious of the time, he had been walking, in a desultory way, for many hours. But a new motive for action having presented itself, he returned back briskly, and found himself gifted with that which with some is so great a desideratum, and with others so considerable an inconvenience—a sharp appetite.

On returning back to the streets of the town, he bethought himself how he should best satisfy the craving that beset him; and as the strictest economy was necessary, he looked out for a cook's shop. There were plenty of them; but he was rather fastidious. He passed several feeding-places, in which huge rounds of beef were in the act of being cut up by other rounds of beef on two legs, and although a certain steam of savoriness excited carnivorous propensities, he could not see any place with the air of privacy which he sought for. At last, in going through the celebrated passage of Great Turnstile, leading to Lincoln's Inn Fields, he saw written up on a humble-

looking doorway, "Dining-rooms — private parlour upstairs." Thinking that this was the sort of medium place of refection suitable to his gentility and finances, he conquered the remains of a little disinclination to the experiment, and plunged into the passage. An intense smell of boiled beef and greens guided him on his way, and presently coming to a narrow flight of stairs, and passing on his right the manufactory in which the delicate viands which distinguished that establishment were elaborated, he found himself in a small room, divided by wooden partitions into little pens or stalls, in which the feeders sat.

Placing himself among them, a female attendant immediately presented herself to his notice:—

"Roast beef, boiled beef, line o' pork, and roast mutton?"

"I'll take some roast beef, if you please."

"Potatoes?"

"And potatoes."

"Beer?"

"Some porter, if you please."

"A pint?"

"Yes, a pint."

"Trouble you for the money."

Frank pulling out some silver, the damsel selected a sixpence, and giving him fourpence in change, disappeared.

While his entertainment was being prepared, Frank cast his eyes about him with some little hesitation, approaching to a sort of bashfulness in his looks, to see what sort of company he was among. He observed nothing particular in their general appearance, excepting that it struck him that they all looked a little seedy in their habiliments, and that they eat with a celerity and dispatch which denoted that they had other business in hand besides the one before them. But there was one hungry expectant, sitting to the left of the same box, whose appearance strongly attracted his attention.

This individual, who was about forty years of age, was dressed in a very old pea-green

coat, with brass buttons, set off by a plum-coloured velvet waistcoat, curiously rusty, especially across the breast, and exhibiting shades of wear here and there, giving it a variegated appearance, as if it was afflicted with the mange. A remarkable protuberance of that part of his person provided by nature as a receptacle for the fruits of the earth, caused a distension of his nether garment, which occasioned an unseemly revelation of that indispensable portion of a gentleman's dress which is outwardly and visibly represented by a collar or a frill. Of the latter it was void; but a most liberal display of the former seemed to boast that it was part and parcel of a real shirt. Above, and partly inclosed within the shirt-collar, was a very fat and very dirty face; and an immense quantity of hair, of an ambiguous colour, formed a sort of frame to the resemblance of the human face divine.

Frank regarded this strange-looking person with considerable curiosity, and was at a loss

to make out to what class or grade of society this denizen of the eating-house belonged. There was an air of assurance, and an assumption of importance about the man, which indicated that, in his own opinion, he was a person of some consequence. Frank cast his eyes at the hands of the unknown, and observed that they were thick and chubby, and of a redness and coarseness that betokened the habit of their owner not to be sparing in the use of them; but three splendid-looking rings of massive mosaic gold, which adorned some fat fingers intensely begrimed with ink and dirt, afforded presumption that the wearer assumed to be a man of rank and fashion.

This imposing personage sat in a corner, with a fidgetty restlessness in his manner that seemed to signify that some weighty affair was agitating his mind. Ever and anon he stood up, and put on a very old white hat, which he again appended to a convenient peg, as if hesitating as to his own intentions. Sometimes he would take up his knife and fork, and

mechanically, as it were, and in a sort of absence of mind, he would give them a little flourish over the bare table-cloth, as if he was about to commence a real repast; and then, with a disappointed air, he would lay them down again in parallel lines, or, balancing the knife on the forefinger of his right hand, on which was displayed an immense stone of a yellow colour, he would tap it, with an impatient air, upon the salt-cellar.

In the meantime, rumbling and doleful sounds issued at intervals from the interior man, like the moanings of nature complaining of a vacuum; and then he would give a vigorous pull at his velvet waistcoat, to enforce a junction with his trowsers. But like those two mathematical lines which may for ever approach each other and never meet, the obstinate vestments refused to come together.

Frank Coverley began to fear that the temptation to risibility was getting the better of his feelings of politeness, when another individual appeared at the doorway, and leaning

over to the corner, with a shake of his head at the velvet-waistcoated personage, said, hurriedly and briefly, in a whisper, which was overheard by Frank—

"Won't take it at no price; they've lots of copy, two good fires, and they're chock full of murders."

"What am I to do?" whispered Velvet-waistcoat, in reply, his countenance betraying his emotions. I haven't got a rap, and I've had no dinner!"

"I'll be hanged if I know; I'm hard up too. No trust here, eh?"

"Devil a bit! I've tried 'em before, but it was no go!"

"I'm cleaned out, or I would help you. But never mind—better luck to-morrow. Good-bye, old fellow!"

"Better luck to-morrow!" muttered Velvet-waistcoat, reaching down his hat, and smoothing it with the sleeve of his coat—"better luck to-morrow! But what's to be done to-day?" Jamming his old hat, with a pettish air,

on to the top of his head, where it stuck with a jaunty air, he was about to emerge from his corner, when his attention was arrested by the sight of Frank Coverley's plate of beef.

The vision of this plate of beef was, under the circumstances, particularly tantalising. It was cut from a fresh joint—hot and smoking; embellished with judicious slices of fat, and juicy with gravy; two smiling potatoes formed a pleasing back-ground, and a pint of porter, in a bright pewter pot, with a creaming head of foam, gave a finish to the appetising picture.

The sensations excited by such a sight in the bosom of the velvet waistcoat were irresistible. His eyes glistened, and his mouth watered. From the plate, his regards were transferred to the master of this enviable repast; and, to his surprise, he beheld a gentleman, young, of good mien, perfectly well dressed, and possessing that indescribable air which stamps the bearer with the mark of good society.

He stood looking at Frank for a brief space, wondering indeed how he came there, and eyeing the beef and potatoes with an affectionate look. Frank Coverley, on his part, feeling for the condition of one who evidently was worse off than himself, and prompted by the habit of hospitality in which he had been brought up, invited the stranger to share his plate of beef, to which the velvet waistcoat, after some little coquetting—declaring that he was not in the least hungry, having had a saveloy for breakfast—assented. One plate of beef brought on another, and Frank Coverley having, in the exuberance of his hospitality, called for a pot of stout, the heart which the velvet waistcoat covered, so warmed in favour of his entertainer, that he began to interest himself in his affairs; and to induce a like confidence in the dispenser of the beef and beer, he commenced by some confidential communications of his own concerns.

"You see, sir, I come here sometimes, because the place is retired, and frequented by

people of a certain condition—no low persons; and it's very convenient to have one's dinner all ready to your hand, as one may say; a plate of beef, or a cut of mutton, all hot, and plenty of gravy. In the army, I presume, sir?"

"No, indeed; I am not in the army."

"Thought you might be; because, sir, you see, gentlemen of the army, and of the navy too—you know half-pay is poor allowance for a gentleman—do come here, to economise, you understand, sir; and what does it matter where you dine, so long as you get enough. Now that beef, you will allow—if you are a naval gentleman, you have had experience——"

"I do not belong to the navy."

"Beg pardon, sir; thought you might, as you didn't belong to the army. Studying medicine, perhaps?—walking the hospitals?"

"No, indeed, I am not."

"No harm if you were, sir. Many medical gentlemen come here. One jolly fellow said to me, he had enough of carving all day, and

so he liked, when he dined, that other people should carve for him. He's a capital fellow!—carries the best cigars of any one I know. I'll introduce him to you, if he comes in."

"You do me great honor."

"A pleasure, sir! As for your Bengal cheroots, as I was saying, they are low—decidedly low. You never smoke them, I dare say?"

"Although I have been in Bengal, I cannot say that I have ever smoked a Bengal cheroot."

"Been in Bengal! Lately returned, perhaps, sir?"

"About a couple of months since."

"Anything new, sir—any little startling affair taken place there that would look well in print?"

"Upon my word, I don't remember anything very startling, except, perhaps, my adventure—or rather, a friend's adventure—with a tiger."

"Adventure with a tiger! What a capital heading! If I had only heard of this two hours ago!"

"I was coming down from Delhi——"

"Coming down from Delhi! How well that sounds! Well managed, that alone would make half a column—ancient capital of the Indies, and all that! And pray, my dear sir, what was this adventure? — friend eaten up?"

"Not exactly; but the story is soon told. I was travelling with Captain ——, and, as we were sitting together, a tiger carried him off; but he shot him and escaped, though not without some severe lacerations."

"And you actually had the good fortune to be an eye-witness of this splendid adventure, and it has never appeared in print?"

"Upon my word, I should have been very glad at the time to have been a hundred miles off."

"Ah, my dear sir, you don't appreciate the opportunity. But pray allow me"—taking out a peculiar sort of memorandum book, and writing rapidly—"allow me to take down the dates and the name of the place, and your friend's

name, if you please. Now," said he, in the exuberance of his satisfaction, "I think here is something that Parr cannot refuse."

"Parr? Mr. Parr!" said Frank. "Excuse me, that is a name that I know. I met a gentleman of that name abroad. Can you give me his address?"

"You know Mr. Parr? How very fortunate! Then, perhaps, I may ask you to do me a very particular favour. In short, sir, I furnish occasional information to the press. Poorly paid, sir; three halfpence a line—no more. And they cut it down sadly, what I do send—that's a fact. But I think I can make something of the tiger story; and perhaps, sir, you would do me the very great favour to take it from me, with your recommendation—and you can say that you will vouch for the fact. Say it comes from me, sir, if you please; I shall put my name at the bottom of it."

Frank Coverley did not like to refuse doing a kindly service, though his uncere

monious acquaintance was a stranger to him; but he requested him to be quick, as he should like to call on Mr. Parr without delay.

"In two minutes, sir—in less than two minutes it shall be ready."

The reporter of news to the press immediately began to write in his note-book, and, with a readiness of composition that was extraordinary to Frank, in an incredibly short time he handed him a large mass of slips of paper, containing, as it seemed, matter enough for a small pamphlet. The reporter made an impromptu calculation on his thumb-nail of the quantity, rubbing his hands, and ejaculating, with much glee—

"Two columns solid minion; twice 212, 424; half again, 636 pence—that's 12 in 63 go five times—53 shillings. And now, sir, if you please, I'm your man; happy to shew you the way to Mr. Parr's office."

At this moment the comrade of the reporter, who had interchanged with him the unsatisfactory colloquy overheard by Frank Coverley

reappeared, and, shaking his comrade significantly by the hand, whispered, hastily—

"Wouldn't leave you in the lurch, old fellow; just looked in as I went by to see if you were here. Can't stay a moment—got a meeting to attend, and I raised some blunt on the copy to be sent. So I'm off."

The countenance of the reporter exhibited an instantaneous change at this communication. Calling with an authoritative air for the "account," he slapped down a half-crown for the payment of his share of the entertainment, and demanded the change, out of which he pushed forward the customary penny-piece as his contribution towards the honorarium of the waiting-maid. Then applying one hand to his waistcoat and the other to his nether garment, he gave at each a desperate and simultaneous pull, and, setting his white hat airily on his head, they left the house together.

It was late in the afternoon, and when they reached the office they found that Mr. Parr had

left for the day. Having agreed to meet his new acquaintance at eleven o'clock the next day, at which hour the reporter said they were sure to catch him, they separated, and Frank returned towards his lodging. But first he thought that he would call at Mr. Playfair's, to ascertain if there were any letters for him. He found a short one from Colonel Yelloley, announcing his return to England, and regretting that he could not furnish him with Miss Lesley's address, and concluding with an invitation to Mangoe Lodge; but adding, in a postscript, that Mrs. Yelloley had just told him that her invitations to her family, which had been previously given, precluded the possibility of offering Mr. Coverley a bed at present, but that Colonel Yelloley would shortly be in town, when he hoped to have the pleasure of seeing Frank, and talking over his adventures.

This letter was but a cold comfort, but the other was more encouraging. It was a letter from Mr. ——, with whom Frank had visited

Aix-la-Chapelle, couched in the kindest terms, and stating his request that Mr. Coverley would call on him, in —— Square, the next day, at one o'clock, as he had a proposal to make to him, which, possibly, it might be agreeable to him to accept.

It was too late to call on Mr. ——· that day, and Frank was obliged to restrain his impatience till visiting time on the next; but, in the meanwhile, there was hope to animate him, and, with a lighter heart than he had known for a long time, he waited with eager curiosity for the morrow.

## CHAPTER II.

"There was a virtue once, called 'modest merit'—
Our grandsires loved it—but their sons despise it;
For modesty's a gift they don't inherit:—
*Now*, if you've merit, you must *advertise* it."

Frank Coverley had never had the opportunity of observing the interior operations of the mysterious manufactory of the London press, and it was with considerable curiosity, therefore, that he bent his steps to the office in which Mr. Parr was an influential coadjutor. He found his new acquaintance, the reporter, ready at his post, and handing his card to a grave-looking person standing behind a high desk with little rails in front to

guard against the intrusions of the vulgar, he asked to see Mr. Parr.

The grave-looking person looked at his card, and then looked at him.

"Have you an appointment?"

"An appointment! What for?"

"Unless you have an appointment, Mr. Parr cannot possibly grant you an interview; he is so very much engaged."

"I am acquainted with Mr. Parr, and I have called to see him. Is there any difficulty?"

"Mr. Parr is exceedingly busy, and he never sees gentlemen without a previous appointment. Is it on any business connected with the paper?"

"Why, my business is to see him, and I have something to say (thinking of the reporter's narrative, which he had promised to hand to him) about the paper too."

Upon this, the grave-looking person applied his mouth to a tin tube, and vociferated "Boy!"

Obedient to his summons, the devil, for such is the technical designation of those imps of blackness, presently appeared.

"See if Mr. Parr is in his room."

The devil disappeared.

"Is Mr. Parr the editor?" inquired Frank Coverley.

"We never mention the name of the editor, nor of any gentleman connected with the establishment," replied the functionary, with an air of mysterious importance. "The editor is very much engaged, indeed, and never sees any one without a previous appointment."

"Oh!" said Frank.

"Mr. Parr is very busy," said the little devil, in a shrill voice; "but he says the gentleman can wait in the upper room.

"Show the gentleman up."

"I have heard of being 'shown up' by the press," said Frank, "but I have no objection to it on the present occasion."

The grave-looking person tried to smile, but he couldn't; it was against all rule that

so important a personage should smile before a stranger; so he took the pen from behind his ear, and applied himself to some intricate calculations of reporter's copy.

Frank Coverley followed the devil, the reporter remaining in the office, through a very dark passage, and up a narrow flight of stairs, to a sort of den, illuminated by a skylight, in which was sitting a venerable-looking old gentleman, of a benign and subdued aspect, and whose scanty silver hair betokened that he was far advanced in years. He was busily engaged in examining accounts of murders, fires, robberies, and other entertaining matters, in various handwritings, on pieces of silver paper. With a pen in his hand he was rapidly cutting down the lengthy narratives of ingenious reporters into dimensions suitable to the columns of the paper. This he called "pemmicanising the flimsy;" and he was ruthlessly exercising his condensing powers on a long and closely written report as the stranger entered. Without raising his eyes, and con-

tinuing with his right hand to mow down whole paragraphs of reporters' eloquence, he stretched out his hand to his visitor.

"More flimsy?"

"Flimsy!" said Frank. "Really, I don't understand."

"Don't understand! Oh, I see! Beg pardon. Flimsy! that's this. We call it flimsy, and flimsy enough it is sometimes. Want to see the editor? Have you an appointment?"

"I am waiting to see Mr. Parr."

"Oh, the sub-editor. He is very busy, but he will see you if he can. All working against time in a newspaper-office!" And with that he resumed his murderous occupation, accompanying the devastating strokes of his pen with professional, and, as it seemed, involuntary ejaculations.

(Reads.) "'Dreadful fire!' (We have got enough fires.) 'Early this morning, just as the inhabitants of a house in Halfmoon-street, St. Giles's'—(nobody cares about a fire in St. Giles's.") Thrown on the floor. "An-

other fire!" (Reads.) "'Horrible and devastating conflagration in Portland-place!' (Strike out horrible and devastating.") (Reads.) "'Last night, or rather about two o'clock this morning, after the family were gone to bed, and no one remained up, the hour being past at which the inmates usually retire for the night,'—(all that goes out,)—'a destructive fire was observed by policeman D, 481, named Patrick Sullivan, who is well known to the inhabitants of Portland-place and its vicinity for his vigilant watchfulness and constant and general exemplary character on all occasions when his services are required,' (Who cares about a policeman? That goes out,) 'at No. 282, Portland-place, leading from Regent-street to Regent's-park,'—(strike out from leading,)—'which rapidly increased. The flames of the devouring element'—(strike out devouring element)—'illumined the atmosphere for a considerable distance around, so that it was easy to read small print by the illuminating brightness of the brilliant light.'

(Very likely; but nobody cares for that. Was there anybody burnt?—that's the question. All this must come out.) 'At this moment, a terrific and appalling shriek was heard from a window of the attic,'—(terrific and appalling must come out,)—'and the voice of a female was heard crying out, in accents of terror, which cast dismay into the hearts of the bystanders.' (No room for the dismay of the bystanders.) 'The shrieks of the terrified inmate were appalling;'—(no room for the shrieks)—'but by this time the parish engine having arrived, it was happily discovered that the flames, which had issued from a chimney'—(only a chimney on fire!" said the old gentleman. "Upon my word it is too bad to send such a report as this! Confound the flimsy! I wish I had any other work than this! These reporters would beguile the father of beguilements himself with their flourishing accounts of nothings!")

"I hope," Frank Coverley took the liberty to observe, "you will not include all flimsy in

your anathema—for I have brought some myself, which I promised a reporter to place in the hands of Mr. Parr."

"Have *you* got flimsy? Why—the whole world seems to be made of flimsy, for nothing but flimsy do I see from morning till night! The foreign news is all flimsy! Well—you had better let me see it at once—for it is sure to come into my hands to be cut down."

Frank Coverley produced at this invitation the copy with which his eating-house acquaintance had entrusted him, and the old gentleman regarded it with a look of dismay that was quite pitiable.

"What, am I to read all this! and such vile copy too—written in a hurry—all smudged and greasy—and it smells of porter! What is it all about?"

"It's all about a tiger, but I have not read it; however, I can vouch for the truth of it—that is, the facts of the case; but how the gentleman contrived to make such a long story

of it, and in so short a time too, surpasses my comprehension."

In the time which it took Frank to give utterance to this explanation, the old gentleman had gone through half a dozen slips, slashing away with his pen, till he had reduced the composition to about one-fourth of its original dimensions, and after finishing his process of condensation, returned it to the stranger, saying, that as he was to see Mr. Parr, he had better submit it to him direct, as without the sanction of the sub-editor he could not pass any such copy to the printer; and Frank Coverley being now summoned to the presence of that influential person, he proceeded to the sub-editor's room.

He found that gentleman with a pair of scissors in his hand, as assiduously employed as the inferior functionary whose company he had just quitted. Without getting up, or desisting from his multifarious labours, he greeted Frank with great cordiality, begged

him to sit down, and writing, reading letters, communications, and reports, giving orders, and cutting up newspapers, he contrived to maintain a conversation in the midst of a confusion of papers, continual interruptions, and a diversity of employments, which nothing but an adroitness obtained by long habit could have enabled him to accomplish.

"What's this? Copy? 'Adventure with a tiger!' What! have you adopted the profession of a reporter to the press?"

"No, indeed, I have not thought of that; though I don't know that I should have any objection to adopt anything that would give me employment. But this is from a gentleman whom I met at—at—at—a dining room—a coffee-house, I suppose; and I hardly know how, but he has made me his messenger in this matter. While I was waiting in the room up stairs, the gentleman there made some abridgment of it."

"I dare say: he's the best hand at cutting down reporters' copy of any man on the press;

nothing escapes him: no puff incidental, however well disguised, can pass his searching eye; and all the rhetorical flourishes of the penny-a-liners vanish at the touch of his inexorable pen! Well—as you vouch for the facts of this tiger story it shall be set up, but there's no chance of it's going in to-day."

A boy, that seemed like a lump of the refuse of stale inkstands patted up into the resemblance of a human being now rushed in, and, placing a puffy looking packet on the table, at a nod from the sub-editor, rushed out again.

"Here's the foreign—it's late to-day. Confound this flimsy, it drives me mad! It is the most awkward stuff to handle!"

"Boy!—oh—he is gone!" At the summons of a bell something was heard tumbling down stairs, and the boy re-appeared.

"Beg Mr. Seedy to step down; and tell Mr. Drudge I want him." The boy disappeared.

"Upon my life, it is enough to kill a man, to have to get up a daily paper—working

against time in this way; and the editor ill—or at least he is pleased to be so—and can't come to-day; so all the work falls on me."

"Mr. Seedy," continued the sub-editor, as the venerable looking old gentleman came in and stood exposed to the light, with his neck enveloped in a voluminous handkerchief of a supposed white colour, and in a coat which was once black, but had grown so rusty and threadbare as to excite the admiration of the beholders at its holding together;—Mr. Seedy, could you oblige me by looking over this 'foreign?' and make it short, if you please. Have you given any notices of the Magazines? We are late with them this month."

The rapid instructions of the sub-editor were interrupted by the entrance of a principal proprietor of the paper, who, without speaking, took up the skeleton of a newspaper, and sat down to read the fragments.

"Could you oblige me by taking a newspaper, and sitting in that little inner room for a little while," said Mr. Parr to Frank. "I will

just dispatch some matters that cannot be delayed, and then I shall have time to talk with you."

Frank retired into the recess accordingly; but as the partition was very thin, he could not avoid overhearing the conversation on the other side, which presently excited his attention.

"Can you do the magazines?" repeated the sub-editor to Mr. Seedy.

"Here's Mr. Drudge," said Mr. Seedy; "he is doing nothing, and that sort of work belongs to him. I am busy with the foreign, and it will take some time to look over."

"Well, then, Drudge, you can do it."

"Oh! certainly," replied Drudge. "I can run 'em off in no time. Do 'em short, I suppose?"

"Yes; just say something. Pick out one or two of the best of the articles, and praise them. There is sometimes capital writing in the magazines."

"You need not read them," interposed the

proprietor, "as time is short. The quickest way will be to take a notice from the file of a month or two back; don't mention the articles, and nobody will find it out; but take care to praise the magazines that advertise with us. And here are some books that ought to be reviewed to day; they are getting quite stale, and the publishers will hardly thank us for a notice of them as it is. Couldn't you just run over them, and say something about them, Mr. Parr?"

"Really I cannot find the time; besides, that's editor's work."

"He is ill; I left him only an hour ago, with wet towels round his head, writing his leaders. But here's Drudge; you can do them, Drudge, can't you; you don't want to read 'em."

"Not I," said the ready Drudge. "I can always give a pretty good guess what's in 'em from the title page, and the name of the publisher. What's this? Published by Green and Griffin! Who are they? New people! What's the title? 'Recollections of a Naturalist.' I

suppose I may cut up this; it will make the paper look lively; we have been very tame of late. I'll call it 'Recollections of a Natural;' that's a good hit!"

"Do so;" said the proprietor; "and, by the bye, here's the review of another work, which a friend of mine wrote; he has got some grudge against the author, and he wants it put in. It's capitally done—only a little savage; but there's nothing like being spicy. You can take it, Drudge, and just alter the title and the names, and the abuse will do for one work as well as another."

"Any way," replied Drudge; "it's all the same to me."

"What's that?" cried out the proprietor. "A book of Green and Griffin's! Bless my heart! you mustn't cut up any publication of theirs; it's only this morning that I have made an arrangement for us to have all their advertisements, and I have promised to praise anything that they send; or, at any rate, not to speak ill of it."

"I thought you knew that this was one of Green and Griffin's," said Drudge.

"No, no. I didn't pay attention. You mustn't cut up that. Take something else to cut up. It is right to do so sometimes;—it makes the paper look impartial, and shows off the friendly critiques."

"Very well," said Drudge; "then I'll praise it; but it's a pity to lose that hit."

"By George, it's fortunate," said the proprietor, "that I saw it in time, or I should have made a regular mess of it. But here's another; 'The Triumphs of Philosophy,' published by Grub and Grinder,' by John Snobb! Who the devil is John Snobb? Here, Drudge, you can stick this into the article I gave you instead of the other. And you can have a shy at philosophy, it will please the religious people; but do it so as not to offend the liberals. Here's one of Hot-Press and Co.'s:—'The Bleeding Heart.' You must praise that; they are one of our best advertisers."

"Of course," said Drudge; "and here's one of Vellum's:—'The Virgin Betrayed; or, the Delicate Distress.' It ought to be called the '*In*delicate Distress.'"

"No matter what it is," said the proprietor, "you must praise it; Vellum is a good advertiser."

"It's sad stuff," said Drudge. "Indeed, it is so abominable, that I really don't see what I can say for it."

"It must be praised," said the proprietor.

"Will it do to praise the binding," asked Drudge; "and the type and the paper; and now I think of it, I can say, that it is of a highly imaginative cast, which can be appreciated only by those who have poetical minds."

"Praise it, anyhow," said the proprietor, "only praise it."

"But I think I ought to say," suggested Drudge, "that it is a little, just a little, too free, and that we cannot exactly recommend it to our fair readers"

"You may say that," said the proprietor; "and it will be a good puff for Vellum, for it will set all the women mad after it. But praise it, I say, praise it. Vellum's our best advertiser."

"Here's another work, 'The Kamskatka Warrior.' It's written by a friend of the editor," said the proprietor, "so you'll praise it of course."

"It's horrid nonsense!" said Drudge.

"Never mind that. It's hard if the editor can't serve his own friends. You needn't read it, you know, Drudge. Just copy out the title-page, and say that it is an excellent work, the story most interesting; and be sure to say that the author has great talents, and displays great powers as a writer; that's what authors like to see most. Even when you damn the work, praise the author—that is, unless you have any grudge, and then of course you may pitch into him. But put plenty of sugar in this, Drudge, as he is a friend of the editor."

"Leave it to me," replied the obsequious Drudge, "I'll lay it on an inch thick."

"Here's a work that has been very highly spoken of," said Drudge, "published by a little bookseller. I wonder who the author is?"

"It doesn't matter who the author is," said the proprietor; "the only question is, will it bring grist to our mill. The booksellers are the people we have to look to; booksellers send advertisements; authors don't. If you have to deal with an author, whose publisher is nobody, and who wont advertise with us, cut him up; but take care not to offend the booksellers. A newspaper is a property to make money by, and we must not drive money away from it. But I have stayed here too long; I must be off, and look after advertisements."

There was a silence in the sub-editor's room; and Frank took the liberty to put his head out of his closet. It was empty; but Mr. Parr, who had been absent during the dialogue between the proprietor and Mr. Drudge, now returned.

"Mr. Coverley: I really beg you ten thousand pardons. Positively I had forgotten you were here. Now, let us sit down and talk over old times. But first, I must have a word with the printer."

A bell was rung. The printer came down stairs in a hurry, looking very cross.

"Mr. Bourgeois, how do we stand?" inquired the sub-editor.

"Only six columns open," replied the printer; slapping the palm of his left hand with a flat iron rule which he held in his right, with a sulky air; "but all the copy is crammed on us at once; it's impossible to get on this way! The paper will be late to-day. And there's the foreign, and this day's police, and front-page pars., besides leaders to come. We have enough copy."

"What leaders have you?"

"The editor has sent one, about three-quarters of a column; but no doubt there will be three columns more, for there is the motion of last night in the Lords, which he will write on,

and the motion of to-night in the Commons; we shall be very full."

"What ads.?"

"Five columns of ads. They will take up the whole of the first page of the outer form. Another one has just been brought in, but if it is to appear to-day, it must be over the leader."

"What is it about? Anything pressing?"

"Only an advertisement from a young lady wanting a situation as governess; she brought it herself, I fancy, for I was in the front office when she paid for it, and it seemed to take all the money she had about her."

"Is that it which you have in your hand?"

"Yes, this is it—I was bringing it to you, when the boy told me I was wanted."

"Let us look at it:—'Wanted, by a young lady, the daughter of a clergyman deceased, (did you speak, Mr. Coverley?")

"No, no, it was nothing."

"I thought you were going to say something. 'Wanted, by a young lady, the daughter of

a clergyman deceased,' (Mr. Coverley, you have let your hat fall into the coal-scuttle,) 'as governess — a young lady——-' (I wonder if she's pretty.)"

"I didn't see her face," said the printer. "Are those your gloves, sir," (to Frank Coverley,) "under the grate?"

Frank picked them up, and put them in a paste-pot standing by.

The printer said nothing, and Mr. Parr read on:—"'By a young lady, a situation as governess, in a respectable family,' (ah! then, a bachelor's family wouldn't do;) 'she is competent to teach music, including the harp and pianoforte, and also composition, drawing in oil and water colours, and crayons; Italian, French, geography, and astronomy, with the use of the globes, and the usual branches of female education. Salary not so much an object as a respectable home and asylum.' Mr. Coverley, you are unlucky—you have been pouring out from that bottle of ink into a tumbler—you mistook it, I suppose, for a bottle

of water—but here we are all ink—and you have spilled it over your trowsers—you had better sop it up with this blotting-paper. Your hand shakes too much; call the boy, Bourgeois, and let him give Mr. Coverley a rub down. Upon my word, Bourgeois, such a governess as this would make a good wife; particularly if she happens to be pretty besides. And somehow, governesses are generally pretty and interesting."

"Poor girl," said Bourgeois; "it's a hard life she is beginning! The daily press is bad enough, but for a governess there is no rest."

"Nice handwriting, isn't it," handing it to Frank. "Yes, Bourgeois, put it in over the leader, and give the poor girl a better chance of having it read."

Frank's attention had been rivetted by the words at the beginning of the advertisement, "daughter of a clergyman deceased," and grasping the paper with an eagerness which astonished Mr. Parr and the printer, he recognised, at a glance, the handwriting of Clara

Lesley. "Letters to be addressed," the advertisement concluded, "to C. L., No. 28, Union Place, Lambeth Road."

Seizing his hat, which contained a reasonable quantity of small-coal dust, which descended in a powdery shower over his face and shirt-collar, he started up, and hastily wished Mr. Parr good morning.

"Stop, Mr. Coverley—don't take the advertisement with you. Here, boy, run after that gentleman, and ask him for the advertisement. Be quick—off with you."

But Frank Coverley had already distanced his pursuer. In vain the printer's devil cried, "stop him!" Darting past policeman B 488, Frank ran down the Strand, holding the paper in one hand, and making his way through the crowd with the other. His excited manner caused the people to make way for him on every side, and, thanks to his ink-covered trowsers and his dirty face, which was smeared all over with coal-dust, he had the good fortune to be mistaken for a messenger hurrying with

an express, which was aptly represented by the piece of paper in his hand. In this state he reached the end of Bridge Street, leading to Westminster Bridge, when, to his great embarrassment, he ran against Mr. ——, on whom he was appointed to call at one o'clock.

"How do you do, Mr. Coverley? This meeting is fortunate, for I wanted to see you; did you get my letter? Well, we can talk of it as we walk, if it is not inconvenient to you to go my way?"

"Not at all," said Frank, who, in spite of his regard for Mr. ——, and the importance of the subject, heartily wished him back at St. Petersburg.

"You have been a traveller, I understand, since I had the pleasure of seeing you—more than three years ago now; and you have grown darker, I think. How goes on the study of the law?"

"I have been both a traveller and a sufferer," replied Frank. He then related briefly his voyage round the globe, his shipwreck, and

the loss of his property by the foundering, as it was supposed, of the Sunderland at sea.

"Very unfortunate—very! Well, you are young, and you may make up for all this. I hardly know how the proposal which I am going to make to you, may coincide with your intention of going to the bar. However, that is for you to judge of. A friend of mine is in want of a confidential agent, in whom he can entirely rely, to be the receiver of some rents, in the north of England. My friend is going abroad, for some years perhaps, and he would expect his agent to reside in the neighbourhood of the property—that is, of part of it, for it is rather widely scattered—and give his attention to the general state of the farms and the condition of the houses. In all difficulties of law, should any arise, you would have the assistance of his solicitors in London."

Frank became exceedingly attentive.

"Now, your early country life," continued Mr. ——, "has doubtless made you competent to superintend farming in a general way."

"My late father farmed most of his own land," said Frank.

"Just so; so that you would be competent, I have no doubt, to fulfil the duty. The agent would have a house, and my friend said that he could allow him two hundred a year. It is not much; but it is a something. I had occasion to see an old friend of yours, Colonel Yelloley, not long since, and it was from the information which I received from him, that induced me to think that possibly such an employment might suit you, till something better turned up. What do you say to it?"

Frank's thoughts, all the time, were full of Clara Lesley. He had found her at last, and in a manner least expected. The offer of Mr. —— occurring at such a moment, bewildered his senses. The idea of Clara, and a cottage, and a certain independence, although for a few years only, filled him with a wild dream. He at once expressed his willingness to accede to the proposal; returned his thanks most warmly to Mr. —— for his kindness in



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having thought of him, and was about to take his leave.

"No, no," said Mr. ——; "if you are not particularly pressed for time, I shall be glad of the pleasure of your company home, and perhaps you will dine with me at half-past six; and, as we walk, I can put you in possession of some particulars necessary for your instruction."

Frank was almost inclined to give up even this opportunity of employment for the sake of seeing Clara Lesley, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he schooled himself to bear this unseasonable delay. But respect for Mr. ——, and prudence for himself, prevailed; but it was with a most rueful countenance that he accompanied Mr. —— in his walk through Parliament-street, past the Horse-Guards, turning round into Pall-Mall, and up St. James's-street; during the progress of which Mr. —— was saluted by many persons of rank and fashion, who regarded his companion, with his strangely dirty face and disordered

dress, with looks of astonishment, which not even the politeness and self-restraint of well-bred people could entirely suppress.

In this way Frank marched on in a state of complete mortification, and with a reluctance at times that made it necessary for Mr. —— almost to pull him along, so exceedingly inclined were his legs to proceed in an opposite direction. But at last the walk ceased; but then Frank had to return home and dress himself, for the occasional glimpses which he caught of himself at one or two windows where looking-glasses were displayed for sale, made him sensible that it might be advisable not to present himself before Clara, after more than three years' absence, without some personal ablutions and necessary changes of dress. He returned, therefore, to his lodging at a rapid pace, and having quickly made such improvements in his costume as he thought becoming, he hastened, with a palpitating heart to the address of the advertising young governess.

## CHAPTER III.

"Oh, moment of rapture!—the lost one is found!
Those long sever'd hearts are united again!
Bright visions of bliss their fond union surround:—
Such moments of joy blot out ages of pain!"

THE fickle weather had changed while Frank was repairing the damages done to his person by Mr. Parr's ink-bottle and coalscuttle, and the snow was falling thick and fast, rendering the muddy streets more dirty; and the atmosphere was dark and lurid with threatening clouds. A sharp east wind added to the disagreeableness of the afternoon, and the shivering wayfarers in the streets hurried quickly

along, wrapping their garments round them to defend themselves from the drifting sleet and the piercing cold.

But Frank Coverley heeded neither wind, nor snow, nor sleet; indeed, it seemed to him that the weather was particularly cheerful, and he wondered how it was that the people looked so wretched, while he was warmed with hope and gladness.

Dashing through the streets, and quite unaware that he was rapidly assuming the appearance of a twelfth cake, he went on his way rejoicing.

In the meantime, Clara, having deposited her advertisement at the newspaper office, unconscious that Frank was a visiter in an inner room, while she was performing her melancholy task in the outer office—had slowly toiled on her way home, where she arrived weary and faint.

"How fortunate, my dear Miss Lesley," observed the widow, some time after, when they were sitting in their little drawing-room

overlooking the road—"how fortunate that you got home before this dreadful snow-storm. You are lucky for once, my dear; who knows but that your good-luck may continue. You may meet with a comfortable home, and all may yet be well."

Clara shook her head. She had no false pride, and was far above the weakness of shrinking from the attempt to earn her subsistence by her own exertions; but she could not lay aside her feelings of womanly reserve; and to have been obliged to repair to a public office, to seek, by a humiliating advertisement, for the protection of strangers, had pained her sorely.

"I must do my duty," she said, "so long as it shall please God to extend my pilgrimage in this weary world, but—but it is wrong for me to complain; there are others in the world worse off even than I am in some things—without even a home or a shelter from this pitiless storm. Look at that poor man in the

road, standing with his back to us against the gate. He is covered with snow, and seems to be debating with himself where he shall find shelter. Some poor gentleman, perhaps! He would not remain exposed to the weather such a day as this, one would think, if he had a home to go to."

"My dear, you are always melancholy. I declare he looks very droll. Do come to the window. And see—he is moving—he looks like an animated sugar-loaf!"

"Don't jest, my dear friend, with misfortune. I cannot bear to witness misery which I cannot relieve. He may see you, and think you are ridiculing his wretchedness."

"Well, my dear, there is no harm in laughing—he can't hear it. I declare if he isn't coming in—the snow-ball is rolling this way! There's a knock at the door! They have let him in and shut the door, and he is coming up stairs! Good gracious, that silly maid is never going to shew him in here!"

But the exclamations of the widow were in-

terrupted by the abrupt entrance of a stranger. The door was forcibly thrown open, and a living mass of snow rushed into the room. The widow cried out; Clara started up; but two arms were extended by the snow-clad stranger:—

"Frank!"

"Clara!"

And in a moment they were clasped in each other's embrace, insensible to all the world besides.

"Well!—I never!" said the widow. "My dear child, you will catch your death of cold. Well, if you must—do let the gentleman hang before the fire a bit, to dry himself. Heavens! the room is covered with snow! I must go and borrow the house-broom to sweep up and tidy the place a bit. Well, to be sure, this is a scene, indeed! I have heard of a cold embrace, but I never saw one before. Not that there seems much coldness on either side. Well, my dear, I'm going for the broom; but remember, I'm a woman, and am not without

a woman's privilege—curiosity. What more! then I vanish!"

Earnest and deep was the joy of those two solitary beings, as they sat together, hand in hand, on that eventful day. Frank related all his adventures to Clara; and many were the tears she shed as she learnt his sufferings and privations. She paid deep attention to the story of his shipwreck; his narrative of his sojourn at the planter's house, and his description of Constanza. She obliged him to repeat over again his narrative of events in the Brazils, and was rather particular in her inquiries as to the habits and customs of young women in that country; and asked if it was not unusual to allow that freedom of intercourse with strangers which it seemed was permitted by the father of Constanza in his favour. Neither could Clara fail to observe that there was a slight embarrassment in his tale when he came to that part of it which related to his acquaintance with the Brazilian girl; and his account of his residence

there was scanty and barren of incident; but that might have been occasioned by his state of health. It was visible to Frank, however, that there was a shade of uneasiness on Clara's brow in respect to this adventure, and he passed on to his arrival in England, and his despair in not being able to discover the place of her retreat.

He told her, also, that he had entered the very house in which they sat in search of a lodging some weeks before, and they admired the strange occurrences which take place in real life, and which surpass all the inventions of the novelist.

They were still engaged in earnest discourse, when the widow returned, having, with a praiseworthy consideration for the parties within, first knocked at the door—that polite preliminary being oftentimes, as she had formerly had occasion to experience, an exercise of discretion gratefully appreciated. Her interruption was opportune, as it reminded Frank that he was engaged to dine with Mr. ——, and there

was barely time for him to keep his engagement; and although it was with the most painful reluctance that he parted from Clara before he had finished a tenth part of what he had to say to her, she was too sensible of the importance of his attending to the appointment of that gentleman to prevent his departure.

With mutual protestations, therefore,—and with an ardent shaking of hands,—during which the widow looked out of the window at the snow-storm, they separated, and Frank hurried back to his lodging, and thence proceeded to —— Square.

He found Mr. —— alone, but another guest shortly arrived, who avowed himself, after dinner, as the party who required an agent in the north. He was already prepossessed by Mr. ——'s recommendation, and was pleased to find, on a personal scrutiny of Frank Coverley's qualifications, that he was well fitted to undertake the confidential duties to be entrusted to him. The arrangement, therefore,

was concluded that evening; and the proprietor of the estates, with a liberality and a consideration which augured well for the future, presented Frank with a cheque for fifty pounds, as an outfit, in addition to his appointments, observing, that the establishment of himself in the north would necessarily oblige him to incur expenses at the outset, which it was just for his employer to defray; adding that he was always strongly in favour of starting a man fairly in his office.

Frank heartily acquiesced in the justice of that excellent principle, and took his leave late at night, not quite sure whether it was not all a dream, and inclined more than once to take the opinion of a policeman on that point, so sudden and strange was the change in his circumstances. But amidst all the perturbation of his thoughts, one idea and one image stood predominant. The form of Clara Lesley, which ever appeared present to his eye, and her voice, which still sounded in his ear, overpowered all other thoughts and considerations. He could

not resist his desire to see her again that night, and he repaired to her humble dwelling with that intent; but when he arrived there it was nearly twelve o'clock, and the little house seemed so still and quiet, that he refrained from disturbing its inmates, and returned to his own lodging.

That night he formed numberless schemes; but his first and principal one was, at once to propose to Clara that they should be united, as with two hundred a-year and a residence in the country, they would be able to manage pretty comfortably; and the lucky fifty pounds for his outfit would serve well to give them that fair start which his employer had so eloquently recommended in new occupations. He congratulated himself on the resolution which he had formed the day before, not to give way to despair even under the most adverse circumstances, and he admired how he had been preserved and rescued from dangers and difficulties when his position seemed most hopeless. With this new

view of things, he began to be more reconciled to the world; and he was forced to admit, that after all, life was worth having, especially if it could be passed with Clara Lesley; and that on making up the account of its pains and its pleasure, the balance was, on the whole, in favour of the latter — assuming always that Clara was an item on the right side of the ledger. Having come to this satisfactory conclusion, he fell asleep.

The next was a busy day. He first called on Mr. Parr, to apologize for his involuntary abstraction of the advertisement, and took on himself to say, as a friend of the young lady, that its insertion was now unnecessary.

He communicated also to that gentleman his intention of assuming an agency in the north of England, and requested him to address any communication, for the present, to the office of Mr. Playfair.

Mr. Parr expressed his regret in terms of the usual politeness on such occasions, adding, that if Mr. Coverley's time was not wholly

occupied, he had the opportunity of offering to him the translation of a French work which had recently appeared, and which the incessant occupation of his own time prevented him from undertaking. Frank Coverley did not like to lose the opportunity of beginning a connexion with the London booksellers, and he at once undertook the task; took a note from Mr. Parr to the bookseller; received the French work to be translated, and made arrangements for the transmission of his copy to London. He then called at Mr. Playfair's, and found a letter from the good catholic priest, whose kind offices he had experienced in the Brazils. He was rather startled at the sight of this letter, as it jarred painfully with his present intentions.

The letter was in Latin, and after expressing his anxiety for his soul's health, and for his safe return to England, the worthy priest made a brief allusion to the health of Constanza, which he said had somewhat suffered, and requesting Frank in his reply to this letter to

communicate to him his plans for his future course, and hinting that the good wishes of the family which he had left would always accompany him through life. The letter concluded with the request that he would not neglect to inform the priest of his change of residence or country, so that letters from the Brazils might reach him. In a postscript it was added, that Constanza, whom the priest designated as his "heavenly daughter," had commissioned him to say that she had found a small Indian locket, which Señor Coverley had been accustomed to carry at the plantation, and that if he desired it she would forward it to him, but if not, she would keep it as a specimen of Indian manufacture, and as a remembrance also of the English stranger who had been so miraculously saved from the sea.

Frank Coverley was pained and embarrassed by this letter. He could not readily determine whether to shew it to Clara, and explain the mistake which had occurred of his intentions

towards the hospitable planter's daughter; or, from respect to a woman's secret, pass it over in silence. On the one hand, he felt that there ought to be no reserve between parties situated as he and Miss Lesley were; but, on the other, he could not disguise from himself that the revelation would be awkward and liable to misapprehension — and possibly to suspicion, from that feeling of jealousy which seems to be a principle inherent in the character of women, arising from the sense of their own weakness and of their being so much at the mercy of men's caprices and inconstancy.

His final determination was to say nothing about it to Clara, but to trust to the effect of time and absence to wear out an impression which he set down more to the circumstance of the romance of his position in the Brazils, than to his personal merits or attractions.

With this feeling, he sat down at once, and replied to the priest's letter; expressing his unbounded gratitude for the kindness he had received from the family, and returning his

most affectionate remembrances to all its members. He informed him that he was on the point of marriage with a young lady to whom he had been attached from childhood, and who was filled with no less gratitude than himself for the kindness which he had experienced at the Brazils, and that she felt for the Señora Constanza the affection of a sister. With respect to his address, he requested the priest to forward any communication to the care of his solicitor, Mr. Playfair; and he begged to assure him, that any communication from him, or from a family for whom he entertained so strong a regard, would always afford him the most sensible gratification.

His mind being thus relieved by his performance of this act of duty, his attention was turned to his more immediate affairs. He had nothing more to do in respect to his appointment in the north, than to go down to the spot and take possession of the residence provided for him. Previously to that, however, he

thought it would be best for his marriage with Clara to take place, from considerations, as he flattered himself, of prudence and economy only.

He was about to look out for a proctor to expedite a special licence for that ceremony, when it struck him, that in a case where two persons were to be joined together in matrimony, it was right, as a measure of precaution, to say nothing of the politeness due to the female member of the proposed partnership, to get the lady's consent before procuring the licence.

A little abashed at his thoughtless precipitancy, he bent his steps towards Lambeth, resolving in his mind the proper mode of proposing an immediate union; which, although it was certainly the simplest thing in the world to carry into effect, when the two parties are agreed, and have neither relations nor friends to control them, seemed, on the present occasion, to present some embarrassment from its

abruptness. He was still considering the form of expression most suitable to convey the desirableness of an immediate marriage, when he found himself at the door of Clara's dwelling.

## CHAPTER IV.

"Hard! that base cares Love's eloquence should stop!
There's no romance, ma'am, in a mutton-chop!"

He found her sitting with her friend, the experienced widow, with whom it seemed she had been having some conversation of an exciting nature, as her cheeks, on his entrance, became suffused with blushes; and the latter lady assumed an air of primness, which was evidently put on to disguise the tenour of her previous observations.

Frank's air was so grave from the importance of the subject with which his thoughts were engrossed, that Clara expressed concern

at its appearance; but her friend being more skilled in the expression of the countenance on such occasions, indulged in a meaning smile; and presently afterwards, had the good-nature to recollect that she had some purchases to make out of doors, which could not be postponed. She took her departure accordingly, apologizing for being so rude as to leave Mr. Coverley; which apologies, Mr. Coverley received with the most obliging readiness, requesting her particularly not to put herself to any inconvenience by hurrying back, as he would endeavour to entertain Miss Lesley with some chat of old times till her return.

This little arrangement having been made, to the satisfaction of all parties, Frank found himself alone with Clara. But, with the wish of his heart on his lips, for the life of him he could not hit upon a form of words to please him for the introduction of his proposal. He remained for a space of time, which seemed immeasurably long to Clara, pondering on the subject in a fit of deep abstraction. All he had

to say might be communicated in very few words; but the difficulty was to begin.

At last he fetched a long breath, and gazing intensely at the inside of his hat, remarked, with a sort of desperation, that it was "a very fine day."

Clara meekly assented to this assertion, although, as it was raining very fast at the time, she did not exactly comprehend the appropriateness of the observation; but with a woman's instinct, she made allowances.

There was another pause; and it seemed that Frank's extremely interesting remark on the state of the weather had exhausted his powers of conversation. He laid his hat on the table;—that seemed to relieve him a little. He took off his gloves;—that looked like preparation; but he was still dumb. The silence was becoming embarrassing, and, with Clara's quick sensitiveness to take alarm, almost painful; and it was in an accent of tender interest, that she asked him—

"If anything had happened?"

"My dearest Clara, the most fortunate thing in the world has happened. The gentleman who has engaged my services in the North has placed in my hands a sum of money, as a sort of outfit, which, at the present moment, is most acceptable. And besides, there is a house, furnished, I understand—that is, a cottage—ready. My allowance will be only two hundred a year, but that income, though small, is enough for—that is, is more than I want for myself. But I am afraid I shall make a poor hand at housekeeping."

"I was fearful," said Clara, in a low voice, "that some disaster had occurred, from your looks; but in truth, I fear I am grown very nervous." And with that she resumed the painting of some flowers, on which she was occupied on his entrance. They were for a screen, which she had been commissioned to complete, and the result of her labours was to furnish her with the means of procuring her daily bread.

"Clara," said Frank, after a pause, and

with a sort of mighty effort, in a voice thick with emotion, and an air of greater gravity than ever—"I have something very serious to say to you."

Clara's form became visibly agitated at this announcement, and her hand was affected with a tremulous motion, which caused her brush to make a variety of agitated little dots on her painting, by no means contemplated in its original composition.

"My dear Clara," pursued Frank, "when I reflect on our long attachment"—(here he stopped.)

Clara worked away with her brush, with extraordinary energy.

"When I reflect on our long attachment, you will permit me, perhaps, to make a proposal—the abruptness of which—I feel—can be excused only by the peculiarity of our respective positions."

Poor Clara's nervousness increased; but bending over her work with greater earnestness than ever, she frantically caught hold of a

cake of vermilion, and rubbing it desperately over the reds, greens, and blues on her palette, produced a confusion of colours deserving of a patent for the novelty of their combination.

"Which can be excused only by the peculiarity of our respective positions. In short, my dearest Clara, the fact is, that I must leave town for the North within three days—and before that time—I confess the time is short, but what I want to say is this——"

"The man with the coals, Miss," said the maid of all work; "and Mrs. Ramsay is out, and he wants the money."

"D—n the coals! I beg pardon, Miss Lesley—I meant to say, tell the man to go to the devil!"

The maid vanished.

"As I was saying, my dear Clara——"

"I've told the man what the gentleman said," cried the maid, at the outside of the door; "but he says he wont go."

"Excuse me, Frank," said Clara, blushing with mingled shame and vexation, "but we

are obliged to be very punctual in our little payments here. Martha, take the money; here's the eighteen-pence."

"It is very annoying," said Frank. "I was just going to say, Clara, that situated as we are—and particularly as I am—the best thing for us to do is to take——"

"Half-a-pound of best Dorset," interrupted the maid, displaying that economical article, enveloped in a cabbage-leaf.

"There, that will do;—lay it down."

Setting it down on the table, the maid disappeared.

"The best thing that we can do, my dear Clara," continued Frank, with his eyes fixed on the butter in the cabbage-leaf, "is to take advantage of the opportunity; and if you will permit me to procure——"

"A pound of rushlights, Miss!" cried the indefatigable maid from the outside, a little dismayed at the gentleman's last looks. "Mrs. Ramsay has sent them in; they *are* paid for."

"Come in," said Clara; "put them down anywhere."

The maid gave a glance at Frank, and thinking he looked very desperate, she clapped the rushlights, in her fright, on the butter in the cabbage-leaf, and ran off.

"Upon my word," said Frank, "it is as if Mrs. Ramsay did it on purpose. At such a time, to be interrupted in this way—on the most serious occasion of my whole life——"

"Beg pardon, Miss," said the maid, with a tremulous tap on the door, and in a sort of raised whisper,—"here's the man with the bread, — and I've got the potatoes, — and Mrs. Ramsay has sent in three mutton chops."

"Bring them in, for Heaven's sake!" said Frank, rising up in despair.

The girl obeyed, hurriedly. Setting a half-quartern upright on the table by the side of the butter and the rushlights, she clapped the mutton-chops on the top of it, and producing some potatoes from her apron, turned them promiscuously on the table

"Upon my word, my dear Clara, you will have a miscellaneous collection presently."

"You see how poor people manage, Frank; we must bend to our circumstances; and, indeed, I am thankful to Providence for having provided me with this humble home, and for enabling me to earn my bread by my labour."

"We have been two unfortunate beings, dear Clara," said Frank, placing himself by her side and taking her hand, "and we have had to fight our battle with the world hardly. Why should we not unite our strength, and by our mutual support and consolation aid each other in our struggle? Dearest Clara, the time is short, and circumstances press us. I am bound to repair to the place of my occupation immediately, but I feel that I cannot go without endeavouring to secure you, now that I have at last found you again. Tell me, Clara, is your love for me strong enough to allow you to waive the ceremony of an inconvenient delay, and unite your fate with mine at once and for ever?"

"Oh! Frank, Frank, do not urge me! What could you do with the encumbrance of a wife, to impede your efforts perhaps, and to prevent you from taking advantage of favorable opportunities which might offer for your success in life? No, no!—leave me to pursue my sad destiny alone! It will be difficult enough for you to struggle on by yourself, but the burthen of a wife might sink you down, and destroy all your prospects without remedy. Consider——"

"My dearest Clara, I have considered everything. You need a protector, and I need a consoler. I cannot consent to leave you in your present state; the idea of your suffering would mar all my efforts and deaden all my exertions. Neither could you bear the idea —I am sure you are too generous for that— of the wretchedness of my life without you. The time is now come——"

"Please, Miss," cried the eternal maid, raising her voice, from the outside of the door,

" it's time to put on the chops; and Mrs. Ramsay is coming up stairs."

" Then you consent, Clara? Nay, do not shake your head!"

" Let me consider for a little while. My head is too confused to think calmly; and I fear lest, in yielding to your wishes — and why should I deny it?—to the weakness of my own heart, I should give you cause for future regret, and myself for a bitter repentance."

" Please, Miss, it's time to put on the chops!" reiterated the plague of a maid, raising her voice, from the outside of the door.

But the contrast of frying mutton chops with the sentimental declaration which he was endeavouring to make, and which had arrived at such a critical point, was too much for any man's patience to bear. Seizing those inelegant appendages to a lady's boudoir, he tore open the door, and, in an ungovernable excess of vexation, chucked them at the head of the pertinacious serving-maid. But that terrified

menial dropping to the ground, with a horrid shriek, at the flashing of the gentleman's eyes, the unsavoury missiles encountered the good-natured face of Mrs. Ramsay:—

"Well, to be sure!" exclaimed that lady, in the excess of her astonishment at such an unexpected salutation—"It was high time for me to come back, if matters have arrived at this pitch! My dear Miss Lesley, what *has* happened? What *is* the matter? And there goes the table — everything turned over! Mr. Coverley—sir—for Heaven's sake be calm! There's your foot in the cabbage-leaf! Oh, gracious! gracious! What *is* it all about?"

But Clara fled to her bed-room in an agony of confusion, and Frank stamped about in a rage, while the wondering widow, who in the mean time had picked up the delinquent delicacies, stood with them in her hand waiting for an explanation.

"My dear madam, I beg ten thousand pardons—but, upon my word, it was enough to drive a man mad! That little wretch of a

maid-servant! But I entreat you, my DEAR madam, give this paper to Miss Lesley; it is a letter which I wrote, but I changed my mind, and thought it best to see her. And if you would permit me to ask you to use your influence to assist me in removing any little scruple at the suddenness of my proposal, my dear madam"—grasping her hand, to add emphasis to his entreaty—but encountering there the flabby ends of the cause of the confusion, he vociferated—

"Damn the chops—there they are again!" and rushed out of the house.

"Well to be sure," said the widow to herself, aloud—"this is a strange love scene, to say the least of it. But perhaps this letter will explain it all. Miss Lesley, my love—Mr. Coverley is gone off, I don't know why or where, and he has left a letter for you to read. Do, my dear creature, make haste and read it, for I am dying with curiosity."

Clara came out directly.

"If it is anything of a private nature, of

course, my love, I cannot ask to know its contents; but, if it is not, for Heaven's sake, read it at once, and let me know what it is all about."

"Is this the letter that he gave you?"

"Yes, my love; and he said it would explain everything."

"How very odd!" said Clara. "It is written in Latin; I know that, from my poor dear father's Latin books. But it is a foreign letter, and dated from the Brazils! What can this mean? And here—good God! Yes! here is the name of Constanza! Constanza! the daughter of the planter, at whose house he resided after he was saved from drowning! But what is the use of the letter? I don't understand Latin!"

"Written in Latin! That's very suspicious. Give it to me, my love. How very provoking! when we are all dying to know what it says, and can't make it out! Was anything ever so distressing?"

"One word is plain enough," said Clara;

"and that word reveals all! Is it possible that I have been mistaking the meaning of his words? and was it to another that they pointed, and not to me? I am bewildered."

"Here is one word that is understood all over the world," observed the widow—"and that is this word, 'amoris;' everybody knows that means 'love.' The letter is something about love, my dear, that's certain.—Oh! the monster! What a discovery!"

"Depend upon it, my dear friend, there is some mistake about this letter. Mr. Coverley is the very soul of honour, and he would neither deceive me, nor any other human being. No—there is some misunderstanding here."

"If I could only make out what this word 'pignus' means—it's the word before 'amoris.' 'Pignus amoris!' Think, my love, what can 'pignus' mean? Can it be anything about the learned pig? My love, you understand Italian, and this Latin is very like it—only it looks rougher—what can this abominable 'pignus' mean?"

Clara had been plunged in a painful reverie, and the widow's questions and surmises had remained unheeded; but she suddenly started from her attitude of musing, and taking the fatal letter, said, in a mournful voice, to her friend—

"I cannot understand why this letter has been given to me to read; and I must wait for Mr. Coverley to explain it. But one thing is plain, my dear friend, that there is some mystery about it; and having seen it, I must hope it will be cleared up."

"But, my dear Miss Lesley, what is the meaning of this 'pignus amoris?' If I don't find it out, I shall die!'"

"I cannot pretend not to understand those words," replied Clara, reddening with mingled feelings of shame and anxiety—"the meaning is 'a pledge of love.'"

"Oh, crimini! here's a quandary! Then there's another young lady the wretch has been making love to! But, perhaps, my dear, if we could only make out the whole

of this abominable Latin, it would explain itself."

"I must hope so," said Clara, in a faint voice.

In the mean time, Frank, who had left the house for a few minutes only, in order to recover his composure in the fresh, air and to leave Miss Lesley undisturbed to the perusal of his letter, which contained the proposal which he had written, with accompanying explanations of the expediency of an immediate marriage, was struck with the thought, that he might now, without wounding Clara's delicacy, procure the licence; and he solaced himself with the idea that it would have the effect of a little *coup de théâtre* which would bring matters to a summary conclusion.

He made the best of his way, therefore, to those doubtful regions, where more chains are fabricated, and some more grievous in their torture, than ever were forged in the cave of the Cyclops; but he in his innocence went rejoicing on his way, regardless of the forbidding

entrance to those dismal shades, and unheeding the commiserating glances of the experienced officials who hover round its dangerous portals.

The people took a malicious pleasure in expediting his business, resembling in that respect those other less sought for executioners of the law, who hurry their victims to the fatal scaffold, with the assurance that in a few moments—it is only a plunge!—they will be in the enjoyment of heavenly bliss!

"Do you contemplate any particular place for the performance of the ceremony?" asked a pert clerk, as he handed the licence to the incipient bridegroom.

"Upon my word," said Frank, "I never thought of that."

"St. George's Church, Hanover Square, is the crack place at present," said the officious functionary. "It's a little more expense, but then it's only once in a man's life that he has to pay for it. It is almost an unprecedented thing—and it is an event that has never been

known in our office—for a gentleman to apply for a licence a second time; although the applications the other way are very numerous."

Without waiting to hear more of these facetious remarks, Frank paid his money, put the licence in his pocket, and with an air as easy and unconstrained as he could assume under the circumstances, he quietly marched off.

He was not long in returning to Lambeth; and in order to carry into effect the clever idea which he flattered himself he had conceived, he placed the document in Clara's hands.

"My dearest Clara," he said, "the letter which you have read will have explained my proposal better perhaps than I could have effected by speech; and unless my own vanity has deceived me, or that I have misconstrued your assent—you will not be offended at my placing in your hands this paper, which is to seal my happiness."

Clara, in silence, and without lifting up her

eyes, took the paper with one hand, and with the other placed in the hands of Frank the letter of the priest from the Brazils.

"How did you get this?" he exclaimed, in the utmost astonishment.

"You gave it to Mrs. Ramsay for me to read," replied Clara, calmly. "I do not understand Latin well enough to make out all its meaning; but there are some words so clear, that they cannot be misunderstood. If you think it right," added Clara, firmly, "explain them; if not, my confidence in you is too great to allow me to have the slightest doubt of your sincerity. I can neither love nor trust by halves: it must be all or nothing."

Frank thought that Clara never looked so beautiful as she did while she uttered these few words. At once he decided on telling her the whole truth; and he repeated to her the reply which he had made to the priest's letter, and which was already in course of transmission to the Brazils.

"Enough, dear Frank," said Clara. "I was

sure that your conduct was honourable and just; and now, what is this paper?"

"A marriage licence!" exclaimed the widow, who had entered that moment, and seeing an open paper on her table, had taken it up to look at it. "Francis Coverley and Clara Lesley! Well, to be sure—this is making quick work of it. I suppose I must order some more mutton chops for the wedding. Well—and when is it to take place?"

"Immediately," said Frank, "if Miss Lesley's generosity will allow her to overlook the ordinary formalities of an ordinary marriage; but as all our adventures have been extraordinary, and our reunion the most of all, I will venture to hope that the conclusion may be extraordinary too."

"Well, to be sure! A man is always in such a hurry about these things! I remember forty years ago—but never mind that. But, my dear sir, people can't be married as you would peel an orange—without preparation. There are the wedding clothes to get, and a

bridesmaid to be secured, and somebody to give you away — you can't give yourselves away. Bless me, who would have thought of this a week ago! Well, leave it all to me; I'll make all the little arrangements for you. Let me see—first——"

"But, my dear Mrs. Ramsay," interrupted Clara, "I have not yet given my consent. Really, it is too sudden. Frank, indeed, you take me by surprise. Mrs. Ramsay, you must advise me; indeed, I cannot."

"Oh, nonsense, my dear! Why, what would you do with the licence, if you didn't make use of it? it's not like a purchase that would do for anybody else. It would never do to waste the money."

"But, my dear Mrs. Ramsay, it is too precipitate—it is, indeed; there is no time for me to think."

"All the better, my dear; it's of no use thinking when you have made up your mind: but 'immediately' is rather a peremptory word. There, I will act as the friend of both

parties, and fix it for this day fortnight; that will give you time to think as much as you please, my love, and get yourself ready nicely. And Mr. Coverley can go down to the North and get your house ready. Now, my dear, is it settled?"

"I suppose I must," said Clara; "but——"

"There, no more 'buts;' you will have time enough for that afterwards."

"I will make no more scruples, then," said Clara, giving her hand to Frank. "Our marriage is sudden."

"But not our attachment," added Frank, dropping on his knee, and kissing the hand of the poor and humble clergyman's daughter with as much respect as if it had been the hand of a princess with a kingdom for her dowry; "and as it has been pure and constant, so do I feel that it will be happy and lasting."

"Well, to be sure," said the widow, "that was very prettily said. "But men can always make fine speeches before marriage.

Pray God, my dear children, that both of you may live to say and hear them after. After all, I can tell you, that marriage is a very serious affair; some people look upon it as the end of the story; for my part, I regard it as the beginning."

## CHAPTER V.

"In judging others—keep this truth in view:—
A man, to do much—must have much to do."

Six years passed away in all the happiness of a country life, and Frank and Clara indulged in the hope that in their favour the wheel of Fortune stood still. Two children—the most beautiful in the world,—for, as Clara said, her opinion of her children was not like that of the generality of mothers, who believe, of course, that their own children are superior to all others, but as it was really the case, her speaking of it was merely like alluding to any other fact in natural history—two beautiful children, a boy and a girl, of the respective

ages of five and two years, gave a sense of completeness to their felicity.

But this happiness had not been altogether undisturbed. On more than one occasion, the nephew of the gentleman for whom Frank Coverley was acting, had been urgent in his endeavours to prevail on him to advance sums of money to him from the proceeds of the estates, a dereliction of duty which Frank was firm in refusing. But his refusals had provoked the anger of the disappointed applicant, who, as heir at law to the estates, was secretly resolved at some time to have his revenge.

The death of his uncle abroad now afforded the opportunity to carry his determination into effect; and the same post that conveyed to Frank Coverley the melancholy news of the death of his patron, brought also the notification from the new possessor that his services were no longer required.

He read the letters to himself in silence, but Clara could not mistake the expression of his countenance; and the black seal foreboded

sorrowful tidings. She laid down her work, and waited for her husband to speak.

"Clara," said Frank, "we have enjoyed much happiness for some years—too great, it seems, to last. Are you strong enough to hear ill news?"

"The worst is better than uncertainty: what has happened?"

"First, our excellent friend and employer is —the black seal has already suggested to you our loss—he is dead."

"Then we lose a good friend, and the world loses a good man; but your countenance says more than that."

"And his nephew—this is a letter from his solicitors—communicates to me, that 'my services are no longer required.'"

"What! does he dismiss you without notice —and without giving any reason?"

"He is not obliged to give me notice—nor is he obliged to allege any reason; but I can guess the cause. However, the power is in his hands, and I feel that it would be utterly use-

less to remonstrate; it is a blow to which we must submit. And now we will not lose time in repining at what cannot be helped. I must set about some means of procuring an income for the support of ourselves and these dear children."

"What can we do?"

"I have a strong confidence, my dear Clara, in my own resources. I think I may do something in a literary way; and it has been with that view that I have kept up my reading and my practice in composition, as a resource against accidents. That French work which we translated together when we first came down here, did me good; it made me known to the booksellers. And although I have thought it my duty not to spend the time which belonged to my employer in extraneous pursuits for the last six years, yet I do not think I have lost the facility of writing which I always possessed."

"It is a hard task to write for your bread," said Clara. "It is one thing to write at leisure,

and from inclination, and another to write from obligation and against time, as an author must often do. Could you not procure some employment similar to the present?"

"You may depend upon it," my dear Clara, "I will try; but to find any employment without relations and friends to help you on, is a very difficult matter. A man who is a candidate for employment, must not only possess fitness, but friends personally interested in his success, and active to take advantage of the opportunities which may present themselves. Now, I have all the fitness—I think I may say that—but I have no relations—and consequently no connexions; nor have I any friends in positions of influence to serve me."

"Were you not at Eton, with a Mr. ——? I forget the name—but I have often heard you talk of him."

"I know whom you mean; yes; but a school acquaintance is no acquaintance, unless it is afterwards kept up; and to keep it up, you must be able to move in the same sphere of

life. So that, after all, those boasted advantages of connexion to be obtained at public schools and at college, seldom come to anything in after life, unless the parties are on the same level in society. And then, if you are on the same level, you don't want assistance; and if you are not, you are not in a position of social intercourse to afford you the opportunity of getting it—and that's my case."

"That is very true; but still I should think, that with your talents, you could not fail to find some employment for them."

"Ah! my dear Clara—talents are of little use without the opportunity of exercising them. But, however, it shall not be from want of industry, that such talents as I have lack employment. But what must be done, had better be done at once. We cannot stay long at this cottage."

"How long may we stay? It is very awkward to remove in a hurry with children."

"This letter, you see, is peremptory; and it would only expose us to painful mortification

to try to evade the very plain notice which it gives me to quit."

"But where, in the name of Heaven, are we to go to?"

"London is the place for us: the place for any man—that is, one who must trust to his head and not to his hands for his bread—wanting employment. It presents more opportunities; the country is the place for health, pleasure, and ease; but for a literary man who is willing to work, there is no place like London. And as go we must, the best thing to do, my dear Clara, is to do that at once which must be done at last; and by that means, we gain one good thing—we gain time, and time to the poor working man is money."

"You shall not find me wanting; I will shew you what a wife can do. I will go and pack up directly. We have not much furniture to remove."

"That is a lucky circumstance."

"Don't joke about it; I can't bear that. A woman, my dear Frank, can go through more

than a man gives her credit for, if she is impressed seriously with its necessity; but she can't bear her exertions and her fortitude in suffering to be treated as a light matter. And now, with that sage moral, and this kiss, I shall go to work."

"I suppose the kiss is to sweeten the moral, as you give children a lump of sugar with their physic."

"I am glad that you receive it as a favor, and not as a matter of right. So now, only be cheerful, and you shall not have occasion to complain of any repining of mine at this sudden change."

In pursuance of his resolution, Frank Coverley was determined to lose no time in setting about some new pursuit; but his difficulty was, his want of friends and connexions. Not having any profession on which he could fall back to earn a livelihood howsoever humble, he had not only to earn an income, but, without capital, to devise the means of earning it. His friend, Colonel Yelloley's marriage, had

diverted that worthy old gentleman's influence into another channel; and besides, the distance had been a bar to his keeping up any personal intercourse with him. He had often seen Mr. ——, through whose introduction he had obtained the employment which he was now compelled to relinquish; but he could not depend with any certainty on his assistance—not that there was any diminution in the friendly feeling which that gentleman had manifested towards him, but his advanced age and retirement had lessened his opportunities of being of service.

The affairs of his father's estate were still the subject of legal controversy, different parties disputing the right to its distribution; but in that quarter his chance was absolutely hopeless. He had interchanged letters with Mr. Playfair on the subject, but that prudent solicitor, desirous of preventing Frank Coverley from being involved in ruinous legal expenses, had remained rather a watchful spectator of

the progress of the suits, than an active participator in them.

Turn which way he would, he could see no hope but in his own talents; but for the application of them in the country there was no opening. His late employment was more the result of a lucky accident, arising from extraordinary circumstances, than in the regular way of such agencies; he was aware that they were monopolized, for the most part, by professional men the solicitors to parties requiring such services. All things considered, therefore, he decided that his best plan was to seek for the means of an income in the widespread wants of the metropolis.

As his habits in the country had been frugal and economical, he had been able to lay by a small sum of money out of his yearly appointments; and he calculated that the two hundred pounds which he had in hand might be sufficient to support his family till he could find resources in his literary talents, or happily,

perhaps, in some less precarious occupation. Within a fortnight, therefore, of his receiving his letter of dismissal from the new proprietor, he found himself with his family in comfortable lodgings in the vicinity of London.

Their old friend, Mrs. Ramsay, had followed the fashion of the English, and had fixed herself abroad, in the neighbourhood of Bruges, where she had relations; but there had been a constant and affectionate correspondence, by letter, between her and Mrs. Coverley, during the period of their sojourn in the North of England. With their want of acquaintances, however, they could not help missing the cheerful company of the goodnatured widow on their re-entrance into London; but happy in each other's society, and devoted to their children, they were content to live in the solitude and privacy to which their circumstances obliged them.

But Frank Coverley was well aware, that it was not in solitude and retirement that he could find the means of employment; he lost

no time, therefore, in endeavouring to gain acquaintances, as means by which he might acquire a knowledge, at least of opportunities of employing his time and abilities to advantage. With this view, he endeavoured to find out his old Aix-la-Chapelle acquaintance, Mr. Parr; judging that a man in a public position might have the facilities of hearing of opportunities of employment, better than one who was removed from access to much of such information. But on inquiring at the old office, he learned that he had long since left it, and where he was to be found no one could tell him.

He was standing at the office-door, rather disappointed at the ill success of his inquiries, and debating within himself whither he should next turn his steps, when a person passed by him of whose countenance he seemed to have a faint remembrance. There was something also about the old black coat which enveloped the person of the individual, that struck him as an old acquaintance. He observed the old

gentleman proceed to a crossing a little further up, and scrutinize it attentively; it was a new speculation entered on by an enterprising individual, who had invested the principal part of his capital in a birch-broom, on the strength of a new street which had recently been opened in that vicinity. The black coat surveyed the well swept stones, with some appearance of an inclination to take advantage of the improvement; but certain misgivings, it seemed, to venture on an unaccustomed path, and to trust himself "super novas vias," held him back. He took off his hat—if that which covered his head could be called a hat—that he might rub the bump on his forehead appertaining to that particular class of considerations, and it was then that Frank Coverley remembered the bald forehead and scanty silver hairs which had struck him six years before, when he was waiting for Mr. Parr in his subordinate's office.

It was one of the most venerable looking heads he had ever seen; and there was an air

of mildness and subdued resignation about it, which inspired the beholder with respect and commiseration.

The old gentleman having completed his survey, which was his daily habit, returned back to his old corner, from which he had been for many years accustomed to take his start to the other side of the way. As he passed, Frank bowed to him, and the black coat stood still, as if expecting to be addressed, but making no sign of recognition.

"I see," said Frank Coverley, "that I have not the advantage of being remembered by you."

The old man looked at him scrutinizingly, and shook his head.

"I cannot be surprised at it," continued Frank, "for I have had the pleasure of being in company with you only a few minutes, and that was six years ago."

The old gentleman looked at him inquiringly.

"It was on the occasion of a visit to Mr. Parr that I was shewn into your room. I remember, I left the office rather in a hurry."

"Oh, you were the gentleman that ran away with a young lady's advertisement. Ah, ah! young blood! young blood! It made a good laugh. I beg your pardon—but it made a good laugh at the office. Yes, yes, I remember that very well."

"I have been absent from town for some years, and I wanted to find out the address of Mr. Parr; if you could help me to it, I should feel obliged."

"Don't know; I think somebody told me he had seen him somewhere, but I don't recollect where."

"During this short colloquy they had

crossed the road, and had reached the corner of a narrow street, at which the old gentleman stopped.

"This," said he, pointing down the narrow street, "is my way; but if you will walk with me to my lodging, I shall be happy to talk with you, if you wish it."

Frank Coverley thanked him, and accepted his offer, and they proceeded down the street together.

"This is the house where I lodge;—will you come up?"

"If it is not intruding on your time."

"Not at all; my time is my own when I leave the office; but I seldom go farther than between that and my lodging."

The old gentleman applied himself to one of the bells, with which the side of the street-door was studded, and they entered. Following his guide, Frank ascended stair after stair,

till at last he reached a small recess under the roof.

"Pray sit down," said the old gentleman.

Never had Frank beheld a more wretched habitation. From the small window the light scarcely entered. A sort of sofa bed, of the most ancient horse-hair, gave evidence that it was a sleeping as well as a sitting apartment. What had once been a morsel of carpet was now a curious fleecy substance, like a collection of shreds unaccountably held together. On a little square deal table were some old stumps of pens, and some ink in a broken egg cup, which was ingeniously kept upright by being inserted in some sand in a remnant of a saucer. A black tin pot without a handle seemed to signify that some culinary refection was occasionally prepared, but the hob of the grate on which it stood was void of fire, although it was the winter season.

The old gentleman rubbed his hands.

"It is cold," he said; "we must have a bit of fire;" and producing from a little recess a few sticks, he lighted a lucifer match, and searched about for a bit of paper. "This flimsy will do," he said; "and if it will only make as great a blaze as it did when it first came out, it will soon do the business."

While he was occupied with this task, Frank cast his eyes about the little room, and his attention was attracted by a pile of new books, some of them in splendid bindings, and huge rolls of paper, which, to judge from their appearance, were engravings; the appearance of which, and their evident costliness, contrasted strangely with the meanness and the wretchedness of the apartment. He was struck also with the vast quantity of penny and other cheap publications which were strewn about, and a huge pile of which, in the most extraor-

dinary confusion, encumbered one corner of the apartment.

"You are fond of reading," he remarked, when the old gentleman had assumed his seat, pointing to the pile of new books on a shelf.

"Who—I? I never read them, I only review them. Bless your heart, I haven't time to read those things; I only read little light things that don't require much attention."

"What! do you never read the books that you review? I remember being the witness of a scene which, I confess, surprised me some years ago; but I can't understand how you can always contrive to review a book without knowing what it is about."

"Why, I do sometimes read a book, but then it must be a very good one. And perhaps you are not aware that, to read a book attentively, and to review it properly, takes up a good deal of time, and requires a good

deal of labour. Will you have some coffee? I always take coffee at this time."

He accordingly searched in his cupboard for a paper in which there was a small quantity of that literary luxury, and, turning it into the pot, set it on the fire; and producing his only cup, set it before his guest, with a pewter teaspoon, considerably melted in the bowl, which he first wiped on a towel, accommodating himself with a small earthenware mug, which, as the handle was broken off, made a tolerably respectable coffee-cup.

Frank was unwilling to encroach on the small supply which appeared, but there was such an air of cheerfulness about the old gentleman, such an utter absence of all concern as to the humbleness of his own circumstances, or of what his visiter might think of them—for he made no apologies or excuses common on such occasions for the scantiness of his fare or

its appliances—that he was charmed with the novelty of the old man's character, and was curious to see the end of it.

It accorded also with his plan to get some insight into the mysteries of literature as a pursuit, and of the manner of conducting the newspaper press, as it was his object to obtain an engagement with the proprietors of some journal, if that was possible. He was glad, therefore, to find the old gentleman not only perfectly well acquainted with all the details of bookwriting, bookselling, and of newspaper editorship, but willing to communicate the result of his long experience; and, indeed, taking a pleasure in dwelling on the excitements and vicissitudes of the pursuits which had occupied the greater part of a long life.

The acquaintance thus renewed, he frequently took the opportunity of conversing with that veteran of the press; and as the old man

became familiarized with his presence, he threw off entirely any remains of reserve, and talked to him with the openness and kindness of a father to a son. Frank became aware also, as his intimacy increased, that Mr. Seedy's early acquirements were of a superior order; that he was a good classical scholar, and possessed a profound knowledge of the world, and a penetration into character that was not indicated by his eccentric exterior and usual simplicity of manner. Indeed, as he expressed to Frank Coverley, his only care now was to glide gently down the stream of life for the short time that he had to remain, with as little trouble as possible to himself and to others.

"I am now arrived at a time of life," he said, in one of his confidential communications, after some weeks' acquaintance, "when all care or hope in this world is over; and as I have

nothing to hope, so I have nothing to fear. The guinea a-week, which I earn by an employment which is now become mechanical, suffices for the very few wants that I have left. My food costs little; and as to my raiment, I am like the lilies of the field, in that respect, for I take no care how I may be clothed, and as nobody else cares, why nobody is offended."

Encouraged by the old man's kindness, and having a great respect for his experience of life, and his knowledge of the mysteries of the Press, Frank Coverley made up his mind to confide to him the true state of his affairs, and the painfully precarious nature of his position; and to ask his advice as to the best mode of proceeding in his attempt to become connected with the Press, as a pursuit, to afford his family the means of subsistence.

The old gentleman listened to his story with

great interest, and assured him that he should have the benefit of the best advice with which his experience could furnish him.

"But I am afraid," said he, "that I shall not be able to hold out much encouragement to you, to adopt the pursuit of literature as a profession."

"But many," said Frank, "support themselves by it; particularly by the newspaper press."

"Ah! my young friend; the ideas of people in general about the newspaper press are very deceptive. It is a subject that requires a good deal of explanation. Just give the fire a stir with that old leg of a chair, and we will have a talk about it."

## CHAPTER VI.

"For this great fact all men must now confess—
A power exists, which rules supreme—THE PRESS!
A power for ages to the world unknown:
A tyrant now—to despotism grown—
It swallows up all others in its own.
A wonderful embodiment of mind—
Monstrous—intangible—and undefined:—
A modern hydra—which, with countless heads,
O'er the whole earth its voice in whirlwinds spreads,
Rousing men's angry passions at its will:—
Who shall foretell its course—for good or ill!"

A FRAGMENT.

"MY object," said Frank Coverley, "is to obtain employment as a writer on some Paper. I have received a good education; I may say

that I am a good classical scholar ; and I have always been in the practice of composition since I was a boy:—do you think I could get an engagement as editor?"

"As editor! why it is as difficult to get the appointment of editor of a paper as to be a cabinet minister. Observe: there are very few daily London papers, for I suppose that is what you mean; and they require only political writers; it is very seldom that they insert what may be called a purely literary article. Now these papers are of different politics, and as I presume you have, if not fixed views, at least predilections towards one side in preference to the other, you could take service only with one of the few of your own way of thinking."

"I confess, I did not think of that."

"Then observe what a chance it is of a vacancy to occur in the appointment of an editor; and when it does happen, the pro-

prietors would prefer a man of experience to one without it."

"But the editor of a paper cannot write all the articles; he must have some one to assist him. Could I not get an engagement as an assistant writer?"

"That is a very difficult thing. The proprietors usually leave that matter to the discretion of the editor; and an editor is very chary of whom he admits as a writer in the same paper as himself. You may easily imagine that he would not allow a better writer than himself to eclipse him in his own paper."

"That does not accord with my idea of the high-minded character of an editor."

"But an editor is a man, and a man working for his living; and it cannot be expected that he would allow another to shoulder him out of his employment, and deprive his children of bread."

"That is true; there is a great deal to consider."

"Besides, it is not so easy to write for a newspaper as people suppose. A man may be a good scholar, a profound thinker, and a vigilant observer of passing events, without being able to write for a newspaper. The power of writing a leading article for a newspaper is a *tact* which few possess, and which I have known many, with all their learning and diligence, unable to acquire. It requires a large amount of information on a variety of subjects, and a readiness of application, that must never be at fault, or the writer will fail. For remember, the editor is always writing against time, and the inexorable printer must have his copy, so that there is no time to revise and amend; but as slip after slip is written, the devil snatches it away, and one half is usually set up in print before the other half is written. This exacts a decision of

thought, and a facility of writing, which, like poetry, seems rather a gift of nature than an acquired faculty."

"That is the reason, I suppose, why there are so many bad leading articles? And as for the good ones, it is not much to write, so far as the quantity is concerned."

"I don't speak of the bad, but of the good. And as to the brevity which you speak of, that is the most difficult task of all, as you would soon find, if you had to write them day after day without intermission. Diffuseness in a leading article is like water added to brandy—what it gains in quantity, it loses in quality. It is comparatively easy to write a long article; but to be able on the instant—without previous consideration—without having time to consult books, or dates, or authorities—to concentrate the pith and marrow of an argument in a few sentences;—to grasp, as it were, intuitively, the real question at issue,

and to present, in a striking point of view, that particular truth or illustration which the public mind is prepared to receive and would be disappointed to miss, is, in my opinion, one of the most difficult operations of the human mind."

"I can easily understand that it is more difficult to write concisely than diffusely; as it is easier to compose a long description than an epigram."

"Just so. I say this in reply to your mistake about the facility of newspaper writing; and my object is to shew you that to write well for a newspaper is very difficult; and presuming that you possess the faculty, that it is still more difficult to get the opportunity of exercising it. And supposing that you have both the power and the opportunity, I should earnestly advise any friend of mine to turn his attention to anything rather than to so laborious, so precarious, and so un-

thankful an employment as a newspaper editor."

"He exercises great power," observed Frank Coverley; "and the exercise of power is always pleasurable. What an inspiring thought it must be, to consider that the words which you write will be shot forth, almost before the ink with which you pen them is dry, to the four corners of the earth, and that the power of a single mind may sway thousands and hundreds of thousands by the magic of its eloquence. What is the power of oratory compared with the power of the press! The voice can reach but a few hundreds, but the writer's audience are millions! What a glorious thought! to be the guide—the instructor—the mental ruler of countless numbers of your fellow-men! I am enthusiastic perhaps, but to my mind there cannot be a higher or more honorable vocation."

"Yours is the enthusiasm of youth and in-

experience, but you little think of the pains and penalties which accompany the position, so enviable in your eyes, of the editor of a newspaper. Like you, I once indulged in all those high imaginings which you have expressed with so much poetical illusion. But I have been all my life connected with the press, and I know well the secret sufferings, and the consuming heart-burnings of those mysterious directors of public opinion."

"You surprise me," said Frank Coverley; "I had a more favourable idea of the position of an editor."

"The position of an editor!" said the old man, warming as he proceeded, and giving vent to the feelings which had struggled within him for years;—"What are editors of newspapers? They are a proscribed class in society. The literary profession, in any shape in this country, is disesteemed, and condemns its professors to exclusion from all public em-

ployments; but the position of the editor of a newspaper is the most unfavourable of all. An avowed author may attain fame and fortune; the editor never can attain, as editor, either the one or the other. In his arduous and consuming labours, he must be content to forego all the commendation and applause which are rendered to a successful author appearing by name before the public. But this is not the only sacrifice that must be endured by the writer in a newspaper. He is a writer —not an author; to the dignity of the latter title he cannot arrive. He must be content with his anonymous influence; and in that capacity he must submit to see his best thoughts and his choicest compositions feloniously appropriated by others, who enjoy the credit of them—and why? because, as a writer unknown, he cannot claim his property—there is no personality attached to it. And when he is known, what is his condition? He must

live among men as a person not understood; in a position undefined; suspected as a spy, hated as a critic, feared as a judge, envied for his secret political influence, and contemned for his open social insignificance."

"You look on the worst side of the picture."

"It is the true picture; for what is an editor? An editor is a thing intangible, not admitting of corporeal illustration. Deriving much of his influence from the mystery of his identity, he loses, from the want of that identity, the public consideration, which might otherwise attend him as an eloquent writer; and the sympathy, the good-will, and the friendship of those of his fellow-citizens who are capable of appreciating his talents, are lost to him, from the isolation of his solitariness and seclusion. Continually in a false position—high in mind and aspirations, and low in fortune and expectancies—he is ever on the threshold of the Temple of Fame, which he is never allowed to

enter. He labours, he meditates, and he writes; and he exercises his portion of a gigantic influence which sustains or overthrows ministries and dynasties; but no political distinction is the result of his power, as no social position is the reward of his merit. He lives unknown to the world for which he has laboured, and which, perhaps, he has incalculably benefited;—and when he dies, he leaves no name behind him, and his grave is as unhonored as his life was unrewarded."

"Your description is a sad one!"

"It is a true one. And more—should his name ever be mentioned after his death, it is merely as a 'newspaper editor,' who has no right to be classed among authors. And his degradation and exclusion from social privileges is carried even beyond the grave; for the claim of his widow or his orphan would be refused by the benevolent institution established in aid of the distress of literary men, because

the 'editor' has not happened to give his thoughts to the world in the shape of a book bound in boards."

"What do you mean by that?"

"There is an institution called 'The Literary Fund,' which extends its relief, in a small way, to literary men in extreme pecuniary difficulties; and so far as its means will allow, it does some good, and it has been generally well conducted; but it is against its rules to assist that class of literary men which consists of editors of newspapers. Indeed, it may be said that the editor of a newspaper is not considered a literary man, but a something *per se*, belonging to no defined class, and without any fixed occupation, or personal public identity."

"And yet, if any one deserves to be designated a literary man, surely it is an editor, for he has to write on all subjects."

"Yes; and without the advantage of leisure

and preparation: he is always writing against time, which wears the brain more than any other description of mental labour. But the misfortune of an editor of a newspaper is, that he not only participates in the general disesteem in which the literary profession is regarded in this country, but he is shut out from the few advantages which are possessed by authors who come before the public by name."

"It seems to me a great mistake," observed Frank Coverley, "for society to undervalue the merits of those of its members who supply its intellectual food."

"It is a great mistake. The experience of my own observation has impressed me deeply with the conviction of the injustice and the impolicy of society in its denial of the fair and legitimate claims to its distinctions of the literary profession. For it may be considered as a social axiom, that in proportion to the public consideration and the public reward,

will be the quality of any social class. If the literary profession be contemned or disesteemed, its members will be less likely to deserve public esteem or consideration. On the contrary, in proportion as the literary profession is admitted and encouraged, and raised in the social scale, so will those of the highest minds and of the purest integrity—and this observation applies especially to the editors of newspapers—be inclined to enrol themselves among its members, and be proud to acknowledge themselves of its profession."

"They manage these things better in France," said Frank.

"Yes: there the literary man is respected; he has a fixed and acknowledged position; his mental value is not depreciated because of the smallness of his fortune, nor is his wealth regarded as the criterion of his talent. But in this country, money is everything; and it would be a hopeless and impossible task to convince

the vulgar, whose name is Legion, that a man without money can be worth anything else, as it is needless for a man with money to be worth anything else. For money comprehends within itself all things, and endows its happy possessor, in this country, with all perfections. Having money, it is unnecessary to make pretensions to other qualifications; without it, you may put forward the highest qualifications in vain. Be honest—be virtuous—be distinguished for all that is good and great in virtuous qualities and literary acquirements; all these will not advance you one step—will not procure for you the slightest public consideration—nor help you one jot to get your bread. But, 'Get money,' and then 'all other things will be given unto thee.'"

There was a pause; and Frank Coverley remained for some time plunged in painful contemplation. The post of an editor of a newspaper was the reverse of tempting, according to

the old man's account; but, tempting or not, it was one which it seemed there was no chance of his obtaining. But something must be done to get a living.

"Were you ever a reporter to a newspaper?" he asked.

"I have been everything," replied the veteran; "editor, sub-editor, reader, parliamentary reporter, police reporter, penny-a-liner, and all."

"Pray, what is a penny-a-liner, that I hear so much about?"

"A penny-a-liner is a reporter who looks out for any accident or remarkable occurrence, which he writes an account of, and takes to the office of any paper to which he is known; and sometimes part of it is inserted, and sometimes, but very rarely, the whole; and for so much as appears printed in the paper he receives three-halfpence a line—it used to be a penny a line, whence the nick-name."

"But what sort of people are the regular reporters?"

"They are a very superior class. The reporters of the parliamentary debates, for instance, are most of them gentlemen of good classical education and superior attainments; as, indeed, they must be, to report correctly, and with the abridgments which are often absolutely necessary, some of the speeches in the House of Lords and the House of Commons."

"Are they well paid?"

"They receive appointments varying from one hundred to four hundred a-year, according to the paper on which they are employed, and the time that is required of them. It is from this body that the sub-editors are often taken, as their practice as reporters makes them well acquainted with the persons and opinions of the leading political characters of the day, and gives them a ready habit of

picking out the important and interesting parts from the mass of matter which comes before them for insertion in a newspaper."

"I see; it is the sub-editor who gets up the paper, and who fits in the various newspaper matter, according to the prevalent topics of interest."

"Yes; and according to the length of the parliamentary debates, when parliament is sitting; and of the interesting nature of public meetings; and with reference to the foreign and colonial news which has arrived, or is momentarily expected. All this requires great skill, which can be acquired only by practice, which makes proprietors of papers careful whom they appoint to the office, as a careless or unskilful sub-editor would occasion a great loss, by injudiciously printing matter for which there is no room to-day, and which would be stale to-morrow; besides injuring

the character of the paper by injudicious selections and arrangement."

"Is the sub-editor independent of the editor?"

"No; he is usually appointed by the proprietors, but he is under the control of the editor, and it is the editor's duty to see that his subordinate does his duty. The distinction between editor and sub-editor, or assistant-editor, is this—it is the editor who writes, or who is responsible for all the leading articles that appear in the paper, and for the general political tone which it adopts. The sub-editor has no authority in respect to what shall be inserted or not, except under the immediate and daily control of the editor. The editor, indeed, is the commander-in-chief, and all the other officers of the establishment are under him—an arrangement absolutely necessary in a daily paper, the production of which is a

continual race against time; and if there were a multitude of directors in such an establishment, the difference of opinion which would be sure to result from a multitude of councillors, would soon put an end to the paper—a fatal catastrophe which has taken place more than once within my recollection."

"I fear," exclaimed Frank, despondingly, "there is no chance of my getting the appointment of a sub-editor."

"If you could get the appointment, you could not do the duty. You might learn it, as you might learn any other art; but without practice, and without serving a sort of apprenticeship to the trade, you would find yourself like an officer in a regiment, on a field-day, who had never had any training in his profession;—you would not know whether to turn to the right or the left, and would soon find yourself in a dead fix."

"Is it difficult to get an engagement as a reporter?"

"It is just the same thing with reporting; I speak of parliamentary reporting, and of the higher parts, such as legal reporting. You must first learn how to do it, and then, by practice, acquire the facility; and after you have so qualified yourself, you have to seek for the appointment against a swarm of competitors who are struggling for the office; so that, unless you have some personal interest with the proprietors, or with the editor, your chance of succeeding to the berth of some vacancy is exceedingly small."

"Upon my word, then, the best thing to do would be to set up a paper, and then I could be the editor of my own paper."

"Of all the notions you have expressed about the press, that idea of setting up a paper is the wildest and most extravagant of all."

"Why so? Where is the difficulty of getting paper to print on, and ink to print with? I can supply the writing."

"And the capital to carry it all on," said the experienced veteran; "where will you get that?"

"Why, from the sale of the paper, to be sure; and from the advertisements."

"And what will you do till you arrive at the sale of the paper and the advertisements necessary to pay its expenses."

"Why, how much capital would it take?"

"I see you are like the rest of the public; you have no idea of the cost of establishing a newspaper. What will you think, when I tell you that ten thousand pounds would go a very little way in the attempt to establish a daily paper in London; and to set even a weekly paper fairly a-going, you must count on laying out at least five thousand pounds. You would not understand the details of this expense if I

were to go into them, but take my word for it; if you could establish a daily morning paper in London, with a paying circulation, at the cost of twenty thousand pounds, you would do what has never been done before. Better buy a paper than attempt to set one up; but the opportunity of buying a paper is a very rare occurrence indeed."

"When a paper is sold, and changes its politics, that is a great injury to it, is it not? it destroys the character of the paper."

"My young friend, it is plain you are inexperienced in these matters; but you do but share in the misconceptions of the public. You talk of such a paper changing its politics, as if particular views in politics depended on the metal types with which it is printed, and were attached to the walls of the building in which it is conducted. It is the proprietors of the paper who determine its politics; but as a newspaper is a property, like any other saleable

commodity, it sometimes happens that the old proprietors sell it to new proprietors. And then, if it happens that the new proprietors differ in politics, wholly or in degree, from the old ones, and the paper in consequence advocates principles different from those which were advocated under the title of that paper previous to its change of proprietors, there is a senseless, stupid cry on the part of the public about the 'baseness' of the paper in having changed its principles! But what is a newspaper?—a thing carried on by its proprietors; and if the new proprietors, who buy a paper, were to allow the newspaper which had come by purchase under their control, to advocate opinions contrary to their own, *that* would be the baseness. But to talk of the baseness of a paper changing its principles, when, in fact, they are the principles of the new proprietors, speaking their own opinions through the medium of the paper

which they have bought for that very purpose, is nonsense."

"I see the absurdity, now that you explain it; but I confess it did not strike me in that way before. But it does sometimes happen, that newspapers change sides without having been sold to new proprietors."

"It is so very rare, that I do not remember a single instance; and that observation of yours reminds me of another popular error about newspapers receiving bribes for putting forward particular views or opinions. When you consider the money value to the proprietors of a newspaper of large circulation, and the income derived from it, what bribe do you suppose could reach the value of the newspaper property? For you must bear in mind that the value of the newspaper as a property depends on its circulation and its advertisements, and that its circulation depends on the principles

which it advocates; it has gained its circulation, in fact, by its advocacy of its particular principles. To change those principles would be to deprive it of its circulation, and thereby to destroy it as a property. When there is a talk, therefore, of this or that paper having been bribed, it amounts to this—that the proprietors of this or that paper have been bribed to destroy their own property! What precious fools they must be!"

"But still one may suppose a bribe large enough to compensate for the loss of the circulation of a newspaper."

"You may suppose anything; but such a bribe must be a very large one indeed. Where is the sum to come from to compensate for the loss of five thousand a-year?—nay, I may go much higher than that, and say, ten, twenty, thirty thousand a-year? The idea is absurd on the face of it."

"But the editor might be bribed."

"That is impossible; for I will say nothing about the largeness of the sum which would be necessary to compensate for the loss of emoluments of a thousand a-year: the bribing of an editor would be utterly ineffectual. For, as he is dependent on the proprietors, and liable to be dismissed on any day or hour, they, the proprietors, would be prompt enough to prevent the damage which would be done to their property, and the attempt would be stopped at once. Therefore, as I have observed, the bribe would be ineffectual for its object. But it would be an injustice to editors to put the question on that footing. The editors of the London press—I speak of those papers which are respectable from their position, and from the public consideration which is attached to them—such editors are among the most honorable and high-principled, as they are among the most learned of the literary and scientific men of the day; and although they may adopt mis-

taken views of politics, as others opposed to them may think, they well know, among themselves, that the idea of advocating opinions which he does not approve of, would be laughed to scorn by an editor of any newspaper having any claim to respectability.—But to return to your idea of establishing a new paper. Don't think of it, unless you have at least ten thousand pounds ready to be spent on it; and, if you have the ten thousand pounds, don't be such a fool as to embark it in such a hazardous speculation."

"Well, there's an end, then, to all my dreams about establishing a newspaper," exclaimed Frank Coverley. "But I must do something; and yet I don't know what to do, to turn my talents and industry to account."

"Ah," said the old gentleman, "that's the evil of not having a profession. If a man has a profession, he can always turn to it, and do something in it; it is a means of getting his

bread. But without a profession, a man is always at a loss, and at the mercy of others, for chance employment; that has been my sore place all my life."

"I will write a book," said Frank. "I ought to tell you, by-the-bye, that I have written many little pieces of poetry, and some short sketches and tales, which I have never thought of publishing, though I may say they have been a good deal admired. But, upon my word, I think I could write a book."

"I am inclined to think," said the old gentleman, "that you have as little experience in the mysteries of authorship and bookselling as of newspapers."

"I know nothing about it, except that I presume, as a matter of course, that if a man writes a good book, it will sell; and that brings you both fame and profit."

"Excellent things, both of them, particularly when associated. But the fame and the

profit are not such easy things to obtain—especially the last—as you seem to suppose."

"What, is there any mystery in selling a good book when it is written?"

"There are secrets in all trades; in the trade of authorship, when it is made a trade of, as well as in others."

"I hope you are not going to give me such a dismal account of writing books as of editing newspapers."

"Not quite; but if you are thinking of entering on the wide ocean of ink, it will be useful to you to be made aware of the shoals and rocks that you will meet with in your navigation. I can tell you that you will see plenty of wrecks, to warn you on your way."

"You frighten me," said Frank; "but I am all attention."

## CHAPTER VII.

"An author lives upon the breath of Fame!
Thin diet, by-the-bye—but that's no matter:—
Beefsteaks and beer are things too coarse to name—
He wouldn't write so well if he was fatter."

A FRAGMENT.

"LET us begin at the beginning," said Frank. "Suppose I have written a work, and that it is a good one—what is the best way of publishing it?"

"First," replied the veteran, "you must tell me what sort of a work you have written, for that is an important part of the question. You may write a moral work, with a high purpose,

which would do you honor with all thinking men—that is, all thinking men who might happen to read it—but which would have a sale so limited, as not to pay for the expense of the paper on which it was printed; or you may write some story, which would be in the shape of a novel, and which must be in three volumes, of course."

"Why must it be in three volumes, of course?"

"For many reasons. In publishing a work, you have to consider the class of persons who will buy it, and the expense of advertisements. Now, for all those works which appear in the shape of novels, the principal customers are the circulating libraries; and they prefer a work in three volumes to a work in one, because in letting it out they get a larger profit by it. And then, in respect to advertising a book, you can easily understand that, as the cost of advertisements is the same for a work in three

volumes as for a work in one, it falls lighter on the former than on the latter. Now, suppose you expend one hundred pounds in advertising a work in three volumes, to this you have to add the printing, about one hundred, and the paper, the expense of which will be according to the number of copies you print—we will suppose five hundred, that is about fifty-six pounds."

"So that the cost of publishing a work in three volumes, with five hundred copies printed, is two hundred and fifty-six pounds?"

"Just so: now for the other side of the account. We must presume of course that the selling price of your book is a guinea and a-half."

"Why so? Is not a high price prejudicial?"

"Because a less price would not pay your expenses, as I will explain to you. You will receive for your book five hundred guineas, less your publisher's charges, which will be about fourteen per cent."

"What becomes of the half-guinea?"

"That is given to the booksellers and to the circulating libraries who buy, as their discount; those copies that your publisher sells to private individuals for the guinea and a-half, are his profit, so far as the half-guinea is concerned; he accounts to you only for the guinea, deducting from that, as I said before, about fourteen per cent. as his commission. Besides this, you must calculate on sending about thirty copies to various newspapers and periodicals, and to private friends. Now let us see how the account stands. Your expenses are two hundred and fifty-six pounds; your receipts are, for four hundred and seventy copies, deducting your publisher's commission, in round numbers, four hundred and twenty-four pounds, from which you have to deduct your expenses of two hundred and fifty-six pounds."

"Which would leave for me one hundred

and sixty-eight pounds, as the remuneration for my time in writing the book."

"Yes: and presuming that the work took you twelve months to write—and what with planning, thinking, composing, with the necessary intervals of leisure—cutting down, correcting, preparing for the press, and correcting the proof sheets, with various other attentions, it could hardly occupy less time—you would then have one hundred and sixty-eight pounds for the support of yourself and your family for one year in the position of respectability which society exacts."

"That is not sufficient to support a family; particularly when it is considered that a man cannot certainly calculate on writing a work a-year. Under any circumstances, he could calculate on doing so only for a few years; and then, when he has written himself out!"

"There are many other considerations be-

sides that," resumed the veteran. "We have not half exhausted the subject of the prudence of adopting a literary career as a profession. We have been taking two things for granted—that your work is good, and that it will sell; and more, that you have sufficient means or credit to get supplied with the paper to get it printed, and to pay for the advertisements on your own account; but how are you to get over those preliminary difficulties? The stationer and the printer might regard you as a man of honour, who would fulfil your engagements if you could; yet they have to look to your means of paying; and as they are aware of the uncertain nature of the proceeds to be derived from the sale of a new work from an unknown author, you could not be offended at their declining to risk their money on such a speculation."

"Well, then; I should be obliged to sell my work to some publisher."

"That is what you would have to do at last. But I must not dismiss this part of the subject, without saying a word or two on the plan of an author publishing for himself. Booksellers and publishers regard with great jealousy the publishing of a work by an author on his own account. They consider it as an infringement of their privileges; for an author by so doing becomes a publisher himself, although it is only of his own work, and thereby interferes with the business of publishers, and deprives them of the exercise of so much of their trade. For it will be clear to you, that if all authors were to publish for themselves, there would be no occasion for publishers as a distinct trade, and those large fortunes which many publishers accumulate could not be made. In short, there would be no publishers of the class which now exists; they would be merely the agents of authors."

"That is clear enough."

"For which reason, publishers, as I was observing, have no favourable inclination towards a work published by an author on his own account; and you could not expect them to sell his books for his profit in preference to selling their own books for their own profit. So that it is a sort of axiom with those who are acquainted with these matters, 'never to publish on your own account.' If you do, it is a thousand to one against the sale of your work."

"Then, as I was observing," said Frank Coverley, "I should have to sell my work to some publisher."

"That is, if any publisher would buy it, and that you must not expect; you must give away your first work, and think yourself lucky if any publisher will accept it to publish for himself."

"Indeed! that seems hard."

"Not when you look into it. We have just

seen, that the sale of five hundred copies would leave a balance in favour of the publisher of one hundred and sixty-eight pounds; now how much can a publisher afford to give the author out of this sum? Remember that the bookseller is to buy the paper, print the work, and pay for the advertisements out of his own pocket, and at his own risk, for which he must have a proportionate profit; without the expectancy of that profit he would not publish at all; he might as well save his time and trouble, and keep his money in his own pocket."

"But," said Frank Coverley, "you are all along supposing that the work would sell only five hundred copies. It might sell more."

"And it might sell less. Five hundred copies is thought a fair sale for the first work of an unknown author; and a publisher must, for his own sake, calculate on the safe side. You must bear in mind, that the sale of a

work depends not on the merits of the book, but on the personal reputation of the author for writing good books; so that an author must write several works—or at least one work of a transcendently high character—before his name becomes popular. Then, when his name is up, he may for some time sell anything that is not positively and glaringly bad; for publishers are as eager to become the purchasers of the work of a successful and popular author as the author can be to sell it, because it is by such works that they realize their fortunes."

"So that, after all, it is the booksellers who make most money by the works of an author."

"Indubitably it is; but then it is the booksellers who supply the capital; and if they do make enormous gains, which they certainly do frequently, it is to be considered that they carry on their trade at a certain risk. They

purchase an article, not of necessity but of luxury, which has to be consumed by an unsteady and capricious public."

"Then, in short, if I were to write a work, and that work were to be a good one, it would be of no use to me in aid of the support of my family."

"Not a bit of use. Your second might, but not your first."

"But suppose," said Frank Coverley, "that my first work was a very good one indeed—one that would be sure to receive the unanimous praises of all the newspapers and magazines, and of all periodicals that notice new works—could I not sell it for something then?"

"You are making a large supposition. However, I will take for granted that your work is of a very superior order; that would help you very little."

"What! would not a good work be more

favourably looked at by a publisher than a bad one?"

"You must take into account," said the veteran member of the press, "who is to decide on the merits of your work. A work submitted to a publisher is seldom read by himself; and if it is, it is almost invariably referred to another person for an opinion. Now, the opinions of those persons are of no more value than the opinions of any other educated gentlemen who are qualified to decide on the merits of a work, in respect to its matter, arrangement, and style. I grant, however, that, from the habit of paying attention to that point, they sometimes acquire a tact of judging of the probability of a work, from its subject and title, and without reference to its literary merits, being a taking one with the public. For you must observe that a publisher looks on a work not with the eye of a critic, but with the eye of a trader;—will it

or will it not sell? That is the question with him. If the public chooses to buy a bad book in preference to a good one, that is no affair of his; his business is not to instruct the minds or to improve the morals of the public, but to make money by his trade."

"But," repeated Frank Coverley, "supposing a work to be really a good one, as I have described?"

"Supposing it to be all that you say, it by no means follows that it would be thought so by the publishers. The best works that have been written in our language have been almost all rejected, in the first instance, by the booksellers. I need not repeat well-known instances which are familiar to every one, but I can give you an instance of one which has come within my own knowledge, and which exemplifies, in a remarkable manner, the truth of what I have been saying. A friend of mine wrote a work, about which he consulted me. I

thought it a very good one, and particularly calculated to be favourably received by the public. You may be sure the author had a good opinion of his own work. Well; he offered it to every publisher in London, and it was rejected by every publisher with the most sovereign contempt. I ought to say that it was his first work, and therefore there had been no experience of the opinion of the public in respect to his ability as a writer."

"And what did he do then?"

"I will tell you. Fortunately he was in a position to publish it on his own account. He bought the paper, sent it to a printer, corrected his proof sheets, and then placed it in the hands of one of the most respectable of the London publishers for sale."

"And did it sell?"

"Wait a bit. The first month, which is generally considered as decisive of the good or bad sale of a work, passed away, and scarcely a

single copy was sold. But in the meantime one or two reviews appeared in publications considered as authorities in literature, which confirmed my friend in his own opinion of the merits of his work. Being a man of decision, he immediately distributed,—that is, gave away, a hundred copies to various newspapers, reviews, and periodical publications; and he was gratified with an universal commendation of his work, greater, and of a more discriminating and reasoning character than had greeted almost any publication for many years."

"So that he had a most brilliant success after all," eagerly exclaimed Frank Coverley.

"It did but just pay the expenses of printing, paper, and advertising, and his publisher's commission."

"But what was the reason of that?"

"That is one of the mysteries of the trade. His publishers were highly respectable, clever,

and zealous in the discharge of their duty towards their employer; but the result was as I have told you."

"That is a poor encouragement for a man to write a good book."

"And yet people will continue to write books as long as the world lasts; for the hope of personal celebrity is a great attraction with some, although the regular stagers care little for it, and the possibility of making a successful hit is a temptation with many; for when the name of an author is well up, he can obtain easily a thousand pounds and upwards for a new work."

"That is a sum worth having."

"It is. But look at the cost of time, and the sacrifice of everything else, by which it is obtained; for a man, once publicly stamped as a literary man, whether successful or not, is considered unfit for anything else; so that, when he has once begun to write, he must go

on till he has worn his pen to a stump, and squeezed his brains as dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage. And an end must come to his writing at last. As to a literary man saving money, it is so rare a case for him to have anything to save—living, as he does, always from hand to mouth—that such a consummation may be regarded as a miracle not to take place. And then comes old age and poverty."

"But he has his laurels!"

"But he wants bread and cheese. Presuming him to be a good and successful writer, the time must come at last, when his faculties will become impaired, and he can write no more: then he is a beggar. He is not like a man with a profession, who can delegate much of the laborious parts of his occupation to others; no one can do his work for an author; no one can think and compose for him; so that, when he is unable to write,

he is nothing: without a profession—without an occupation—and without bread!"

"You take a sad view of the profession of an author."

"What I say is not a surmise of what might be, but a relation of what is. It is that which I have known, and seen, and experienced. Of all the modes of procuring bread to sustain human existence, the profession of an author is the last to be attempted. I speak of writing from necessity, and of having nothing else to depend on. To be compelled to invent and compose, to satisfy the hunger perhaps of the little helpless children around you;—to be compelled to write at all times, and under all circumstances, in sickness or in health, perhaps in affliction;—to be obliged to sit down and invent droll scenes for the amusement of the public, with your wife or child lying ill by your side, perhaps dying, perhaps dead!—and to be absolutely compelled, by necessity, to do

it to get the meal of bread for your children! that is the condition of many a man who gets his living by his pen. And then to think how the brain must be tasked! with the horrible feeling that you are writing against time, that inexorable time, which moves on and on, while your task is still unfinished! I confess I can imagine no condition of life more dreadful."

"I am now an old man," he continued, impressively, to Frank; "I have seen my seventieth birthday; I have, during my whole life, been connected with the press, and with literary men; I have seen their sorrows and their sufferings; I have witnessed their numberless humiliations; how they are exposed to all the shafts of anger, hatred, and malice; if successful, envied and calumniated—if unsuccessful, ridiculed and despised. I have observed them through the whole of their sad career; their lives of poverty, and their death-beds of

privation. Look at me and my end; I have been an admired author, a successful editor, an applauded writer. But my whole life has been a continual struggle against want. During my whole life, I never was certain of three months' subsistence before me. And now look at me in my old age. By an extraordinary chance, I am able to obtain a guinea a week by my labours. Soon I must calculate on losing that resource. And then what is to become of me? And what becomes of many more like me? They rot and die, unseen—unheeded—unknown. The world knows only of those who succeed in an extraordinary manner—the few exceptions which prove the rule; of those who fail, the world hears nothing—knows nothing—cares nothing. I tell you, my young friend—for you are a boy to me—it would be better for you to do anything than brave the chances of a literary career; clean boots and shoes, if any one will

employ you. Dig if you can; get a knot, and be a porter—be anything—do anything, rather than depend for your bread on your literary labour, for that is to heap coals of fire on your own head."

The energy of the old man, and his vivid description of the chances and miseries of authorship, impressed Frank Coverley with a feeling of pain and melancholy which made him silent and reflective. Despairing of obtaining literary employment on the Press, and doubtful and irresolute as to his plan of trying his chance as an author, he took his leave despondingly, and returned home to relate his conversation to Clara, and to consult with her as to his future proceedings.

The affection of his wife, and the endearments of his children, soon dissipated the gloom which had taken possession of him; and he felt the soothing influence of home and domestic happiness in calming the spirits and

in dissipating the troubles of the mind, while the sight of those beloved objects inspires the fortitude to bear misfortune, and animates the heart to fresh exertions.

Clara looked grave as Frank detailed to her all the cautions and warnings of the newspaper veteran; but she had so great confidence in her husband's talents, that she was not dismayed even by the terrible picture presented by the descriptions of the fate of a literary man. After a good deal of consultation, Frank determined to try his luck in the magazines. He wrote many papers, and forwarded them to all the magazines in town, but the answers were nearly all the same. One was not in want of contributors; another replied, that the style was not suited to the character of the magazine; and another, that the subject was of a nature inadmissible. He tried all styles and all subjects, but without effect; the reply invariably was a rejection.

It was not for some time after this that he was able to publish the result of his labours in an independent form, in which they received the unqualified praise of the magazines by which they had been rejected. But his failures at the time disheartened and dejected him; and he consumed also six months of his time in that unavailing pursuit. He was not aware that it is not once in a hundred times that a magazine inserts, except as a gratuitous contribution, any other articles than those of its regular contributors; and that, to become a regular contributor to a magazine, not only requires a good introduction, but the influence of that sort of patronage by which alone any employment can be obtained, and which is often conferred without refereuce to the ability or fitness of the applicant.

In the meantime, his money melted away. He was living in lodgings, and with great economy; but the necessity of appearing pos-

sessed of money and independence, in order to obtain the means of gaining either, made rapid inroads into his small means; and when Clara regarded her children, her countenance was apt to become troubled, though she made every effort to appear cheerful, that she might not damp the spirits of her husband.

At last, Frank resolved to attempt a work which might turn both to his credit and profit. He was in earnest conversation with his wife one morning, and they were debating on the sort of work to be attempted, when the authoritative knock of the postman gave them a little start; and the maid of the house, bringing up a letter with a well-known seal, they opened it with a little nervous curiosity. Its contents gave a new turn to their thoughts, and filled them with strange expectations.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"Authors may boast that, when they've made a hit,
They live, in independence, on their wit:—
But it's quite diff'rent, when luck that way sits,
To be obliged to live upon their wits!"

The letter was from his friend Mr. ——, enclosed from Mr. Playfair. It made no allusion to recent events, but acquainted him that a friend of his had applied to him to recommend some gentleman qualified to arrange various letters and memoranda, with a view to their publication at a future period; and as the materials were of an important nature, containing numerous anecdotes of the political

leaders of the day, and of many persons eminent for rank and celebrity, it was necessary that the party should be a gentleman in whom the most entire confidence could be placed. Mr. —— added, that as his friend was a personage whose influence might be very useful to Mr. Coverley, he advised him to lose no time in calling on him at —— Square, on the subject.

This communication put poor Clara quite in a flutter; and visions of patronage, and emoluments, and government appointments, rose to her view. The precarious position of her husband was a source to her of constant and most painful anxiety; and it was with all the alarm of a mother, that she considered the small sum of money that they had to depend on, and the uncertainty of their future income. But this idea, which, before her marriage, and while she thought herself alone in the world, had caused her to fall into a state of listless

despondency—careless, almost, of what became of her—now acted in a different manner on her feelings as a wife and mother. Instead of producing lethargy, it roused to action. She had now duties to fulfil towards her husband and her children; and, for their sake, it was incumbent on her to be diligent and stirring.

She was not easy, therefore, until she had seen her husband set off for —— Square, and she fidgetted about, in a state of nervous restlessness, till his well-known knock at the door announced his return. She no sooner heard it, than her lively fancy was employed in interpreting its meaning.

It was a lively knock; and it seemed intended for her to hear, and to tell her that it heralded good news. Even the pull at the bell spoke to her in language which her affection understood; it was not a dull and languid pull, like that which a timid applicant gives, as if fearing the opening of the door which it solicits, but a

good, hearty, vigorous pull, as of one in haste to be let in, and sure of a good reception for the pleasant news that he brings.

The present cheerful summons interrupted the gambols of two beautiful children, and, in another moment, two little noses became intensely flattened against the glass of the window, in eager delight at the return of one whose presence was ever the signal for joyous romps and affectionate caresses. There appeared also, in an attitude of anxious expectation, the matronly form of the mother, on whose youthful countenance was stamped the premature traces of painful thought and long-continued early suffering, and which now was alternately flushed or pale, as hope or fear predominated.

"Good news!" said Frank. "Upon my word, Mr. —— is a firm friend; and he does his good acts with such kindness and consideration! I am sure he is acquainted with all our

circumstances, but he never alludes to them. He does not bestow on one any useless pity and condescending commiseration, sometimes so useless and insulting; but he treats me on a footing of equality, for I am a gentleman, though a poor one; and he proposes an occupation which he knows would be agreeable, and which I really want, for the sake of the pecuniary emolument attached to it, as if it were a favour for me to accede to the proposition."

"How does he look?"

"That's the worst part of it. He looked a good deal broken; but he is getting an old man—he must be upwards of seventy."

"And what are you to do? Be amanuensis to some one?"

"Oh, no—not that. His carriage was at the door, and he proposed that I should accompany him at once; 'if I was sure,' he said, (you know his way,) 'that it was perfectly agreeable.' Of course it was very agreeable,

so in we got, and soon arrived at the house. Open flew the door,—(Mr. ——, it seems, is one of the oldest friends of Lord ——,)—and up we went. I was introduced; Mr. —— saying, that as he had already spoken of me to my new patron, he would not offend me by repeating his praises of me to my face.

"I observed that Lord ——, while he was speaking, was quietly searching me, in the most polite way in the world, through and through. I am sure, by his eye, that no minister of police could have arrived at a more intimate knowledge of my appearance, countenance, bearing, and demeanour, than that excessively quiet and polite old nobleman did, by the comprehensive glance of his practised eye. It seems, however, that he was not dissatisfied with me, for he immediately held out his hand, and giving mine an aristocratic touch, at once opened a door to an adjoining room, which, I presume, is a sort of study.

There was a bureau in the middle, with a sliding circular front.

"'Mr. Coverley,' said he, 'in this bureau are the papers, which require an arrangement that I have not time to give them. Where I repose confidence, I do it wholly and entirely, though not without the feeling that the confidence which I repose in you, from the representation of the oldest friend that I have in the world, is great, and under other circumstances, partaking somewhat of indiscretion. Here are the keys; you will have access to this room at all times, though I should feel glad if you could make it convenient not to give your attendance to this task before eleven in the morning, nor after four in the afternoon——'"

"Those will be very pleasant hours," said Clara.

"'And there is one request which I must make,' he said, 'which I trust your know-

ledge of the world will cause you to consider reasonable. You are, I believe, a married man?'"

"'Yes,' said I, wondering what that had to do with his papers.

"'I must request,' he said, 'that you will not mention to Mrs. Coverley—not even to your wife—the nature of the employment that you are engaged in—that is, so far as regards the contents of the papers which will come under your revision.'"

"Upon my word, Clara, I was obliged to tell a little fib, and say that you had no curiosity about any paper."

"There was one paper, once," said Clara, "written in Latin."

"I forgot that. Well, the old lord smiled at my assertion; however, he was pleased to be satisfied with it; and so now I am installed in my new office, with his good opinion to begin with."

"And what are you to get by it?" said Clara, with a motherly regard to the necessity of preserving the good opinion of the butcher and the baker.

"Oh! that will come, of course; such services as these are not measured by the foot rule. Upon my word, I think it may lead to something—this introduction. Another postman's knock! I wonder if the letter is for us?"

"A letter for you, sir," said the maid of all work; "it's twopence."

"Upon my word, Clara, it seems that we are in luck's way to-day. Here's a packet from Playfair, with three letters. What's this —oh! the devil!—Huntham and Skinnom! Confound that note! they want payment of it. One hundred and thirty-five pounds. I can't pay it now, that's certain. Well, I must ask Playfair about it. He said, long ago, that they ought not to require payment, as they

had taken possession of the whole of the property. Now for the next."

"Here is a foreign letter," said Clara, "with the postmark of 'Brazil' on it."

"Open that with the black seal. Who is it from?"

"I can't make out the signature, it is so flourished; but it contains the news of the death of poor old Colonel Yelloley; and that he has left you a mourning ring as a token of his remembrance of you."

"Poor old gentleman! That was an unhappy marriage for him. It quite changed him from what he was. Those Carltons took complete possession of him and his property. But it is painful to lose old friends."

"And this letter from the Brazils; from the good old priest, I suppose. Yes, it is. He writes to tell me of the death of the planter, and that Constanza, of whom he has been left guardian, intends to come to Europe—to Por-

tugal—for change of scene. I wonder she has not got married. Such a beautiful girl! I think I never saw, in my whole life, such a personification of poetical beauty as that girl possessed."

"Frank!"

"Of course, my dear Clara, you are always excepted."

"She must have been beautiful, indeed," said Clara, "for her charms to have made so powerful an impression on you—and so many years ago, too."

"Why, my dear Clara, you are not jealous of my Portuguese beauty?"

"Not jealous; no—I am too proud to be jealous; but I would rather she did not come to England."

"Well, my dear Clara, there is very little chance of that. It is natural that she should wish to visit her relations in Portugal; and I should like to see the good old priest again.

But I have work to attend to; I will go at once to these lawyers, and see what is best to be done."

He communicated his difficulty to Mr. Playfair, and that worthy solicitor undertook to see those formidable persons, and endeavour to effect an arrangement, which, he said, it was not unlikely that he should be able to accomplish, as there was a question pending relative to the late Mr. Coverley's estate, the approaching discussion of which might prompt them to make an exhibition of forbearance respecting such an advance. A few days after, Frank Coverley, much to his satisfaction, received a communication from him, stating that they had agreed to take a renewal of the note of hand, with interest, at twelve months' date, before which time, Mr. Playfair added, he hoped Mr. Frank Coverley would be in a condition to take it up; and so for the present he was relieved from that anxiety.

He now applied himself diligently to execute the commission entrusted to him by Lord ——, and the specimens of his arrangement and composition so pleased that nobleman, albeit that he was not a little fastidious in such matters, that a friendly acquaintance quickly ensued, which at once re-introduced Frank into the highest society. His friend, Mr. ——, resided principally in the country, so that Frank Coverley saw him but seldom; but from the kindness which he experienced from Lord ——, he was assured that Mr. —— had made a point of speaking to that nobleman in terms calculated to produce a strong and friendly feeling towards him, and an inclination to serve him substantially should an opportunity offer. He had reason to suspect, also, that Lord —— was acquainted with the history of his reverse of fortune; that he knew that he had been brought up in the expectation of succeeding to a good estate, and that all his

prospects had been blighted by a single blow. He was confirmed in this opinion by what occurred at a subsequent period; but in the meantime he bent all his energies to fulfil, faithfully and well, his present duties.

With all his diligence, however, it was nearly a year before he had completed his task; so voluminous were the letters and papers which he had to peruse in various languages, and of so private and delicate a nature was much of the correspondence. But at last he finished his work, sooner than Lord —— anticipated, and in a manner entirely exceeding his expectations.

"Mr. Coverley," said Lord ——, "from the high terms in which Mr. —— spoke of your talents and abilities, I was led to expect that you would execute your commission in a superior manner, but I confess you have exceeded my expectations."

Frank expressed his acknowledgments.

"And although I cannot but feel glad that this difficult and delicate task has been so successfully accomplished, I may say, with sincerity, that my satisfaction is not unmingled with regret that it no longer furnishes the occasion for the frequent intercourse which has afforded to me so much pleasure and benefit."

Frank again thanked his lordship for his kind expressions.

"And now," said Lord ——, "what are you going to do? I should be inclined to instigate you to turn your talents to account as an author, if it were not for the consideration that, although such a course would be of vast benefit to the public, it would be but of uncertain advantage to yourself. Should you have any objection to go abroad?"

"None in the least," replied Frank Coverley; "and I should not care much to what part of the world, so long as it was not decidedly unhealthy for children."

"Ah! you have a wife and family—a sad hindrance to the free motions of a public man; but I will see what I can do. Stay, I will try. You are aware, that I cannot well ask any favour of government; but I will stretch a point for you. Come, let us sit down, and see what we can do together."

The kind-hearted nobleman immediately wrote a letter to a member of the government high in office, strongly recommending Mr. Coverley to his notice, which he read over to Frank, asking him if he could suggest anything that he thought more suitable.

"Because, if you think you can," said Lord ——, "I will write it over again."

But Frank was quite satisfied with it, and it was sealed and addressed.

"Now," said Lord ——, "as this is a letter of introduction, it is quite proper that you should take it yourself; and mind, don't let them get the letter out of your hands, but in-

sist on presenting it in person. I want Lord —— to see you; which I have no doubt he do."

It was too late that day for Frank to call on the party to whom the letter was addressed, so he took it home to Clara, and many were the speculations on the result of this important letter, and Clara busied herself in forming numberless conjectures on the effect of Lord ——'s recommendation; and they fretted themselves a good deal, because they could not make up their minds which was the best place abroad to go to—one was too hot, another was too cold, and a third was too distant. As to the appointment which he would receive, Clara thought that he had better content himself with the post of governor of one of the more humble colonies, with two or three thousand a-year or so, with a house to live in, and little supplemental perquisites which serve to render exile more endurable.

The next day arrived, and Frank made his way to the government office, not without some hopes that, through the intermediation of Lord ——, he might have the opportunity of employing his abilities in the public service. He was shewn into a room, in which were two other persons with singularly anxious faces, and was invited to write his name on one of some small slips of paper which were ready cut for that purpose. He wrote on it, "Mr. Coverley, with a letter from Lord ——, for Lord ——."

It was not long before the messenger returned, with a request that Mr. Coverley would send in the letter.

But to this Mr. Coverley politely demurred; saying that Lord —— had strictly enjoined him to deliver the letter himself, and that if the hour was inconvenient, he would call again, taking the opportunity to look at the letter, so that the messenger could see it also,

and on which the name of the writer was legibly signed in the corner.

Upon this, the messenger retired, and after a short lapse of time, returned, with the request that Mr. Coverley would see Mr. ——. As he was aware of the high position of that gentleman, he thought he could not do wrong in presenting himself. He followed the messenger accordingly.

"I thought I remembered the name," said the gentleman to whom he was introduced; "and I now see I am not mistaken."

Frank Coverley was surprised at this address. He looked at the speaker, but he could not recall to his mind his features, nor recollect that he had heard his name, except as that of a public man. His countenance expressed his embarrassment.

"Do you not recollect me?" said the man in office; "I was at Eton with you. I recollected your face the moment you came in,

though it is now so many years ago since I you."

Frank Coverley was cruelly embarrassed, he could not by an effort call to mind the features or the name of the gentleman who had so kindly and so frankly claimed acquaintance with him; but the other, without noticing his confusion, went on enumerating the various associates with whom they had been familiar in boyhood, and in a short time Frank felt himself quite at home. But he did not lose sight of the business which had brought him there, and fearing to lose so favourable an opportunity, he at once communicated his object to his old school acquaintance.

"Then I presume this letter from Lord —— is a recommendation in your favour. I will not open it, because if Lord —— opens it himself, it will call his attention to it perhaps more forcibly. But what is it that

you want? Is there any particular appointment that you have in view?"

"I really don't know of any appointment to be disposed of," replied Frank Coverley. "This letter is a general recommendation for any employment that may be vacant, and for which I might be thought fit."

"It is always better," said Mr. ——, "to ask for a particular appointment; as to the chance of getting it, that is another affair, but a general application is pretty sure to meet with a general reply; and it cannot be expected that a man in office, harassed with the numerous avocations and vexations of public life as Lord —— is, can bear in mind the particular applications and qualifications of private individuals on all occasions. Besides, you can have no idea how we are overwhelmed with applications for the smallest appointment that there is to be given away, and a large number of them backed by recommendations

from members of parliament and persons of the highest influence, who, of course, must be attended to, so that it is exceedingly rare for any appointment to be bestowed independently of political and party considerations. But you may depend on my doing my best for you. You are aware that Lord —— is not considered an adherent of the government, but his recommendation will insure attention, and that is something. Besides, it is a guarantee, and obviates the necessity of inquiries. By-the-bye, what is your profession?—a good deal will depend on that."

"I am sorry to say, that various circumstances have prevented me from adopting any profession."

"That is unfortunate; it is not easy to find employment for a man without a profession. As to the appointment of governor, that is entirely a matter of political patronage. But if you were in the law, now, there might

be an opportunity of appointing you to some office connected with it; or in the army or the navy; or if you were a medical man; but for a man without a profession there are so few opportunities of giving him a lift, that really I do not like to hold out to you any hope which might end in disappointment. But, as I have said, I will do what I can; and if anything turns up in which I can be of use to you, I will endeavour to turn it to your advantage."

Frank expressed his warmest thanks for this very kind and friendly promise.

"But you must see how difficult it is to find anything for any man merely on the score of his talents or fitness for the office. The obtainment of a public appointment, even of the humblest kind, must depend on political influence. With the large number of those in the House of Lords and in the House of Commons who are political supporters of the

government, who have to oblige their friends or to remunerate their election supporters, and whose applications for government appointments command attention, you may easily understand how small a chance a man can have who has nothing but his merit and his fitness to recommend him, and without strong parliamentary interest to back up his pretensions. That slight chance is rendered still less when a man has no profession to form a convenient channel by which to slide him into some public employment. But still, I say, I will do what I can; though I must warn you that I have very little hope indeed of being able to assist you to any employment worth the acceptance of one like yourself," — he concluded, smiling, with great good nature, and little aware of the festering wound he was laying open,—"who happen to be a gentleman without a profession."

With those stinging words the conversation

ended, leaving Frank Coverley to return to his lodgings, cursing his unlucky fate, but still not without a remnant of hope from the unexpected meeting with an old schoolfellow who had so generously acknowledged such an acquaintance; and on his relating his interview to Clara, she agreed with him that there was hope; and in the meantime she urged him to persevere in his intention of writing some work.

Frank could not abandon that delusion which has deceived so many—the idea that he might be the exception to the general rule of conferring public employments; and he was persevering in his inquiries after all vacant offices at home and abroad, and he continued for many months to struggle on in all the sickness of heart produced by hope deferred, when a new occurrence in his eventful life placed him suddenly in a position which he had long most coveted, and which he least expected.

## CHAPTER IX.

"How much an editor would lose, if he
(Abandoning mysterious incogs)
Wrote little 'I,' instead of mighty 'We;'
For when a man the public memory jogs,
In a tremendous slashing leading article,
To stamp upon the thunderbolt, '*Tim Snogs!*'
Would spoil its efficacy no small particle:—
There is much virtue in that same plurality—
It neutralizes individuality."

A Fragment.

The good Roman-catholic priest, who had taken such a liking to Frank Coverley after his shipwreck on the coast of Brazil, had occasion to transact some business with a merchant in London, on account of the estate of his ward's daughter; and he took the opportunity

to make some inquiries, but in an exceedingly guarded manner, of the position and prospects of his young friend, but he was unreserved in his praises of his talents and general good qualifications. He mentioned, also, the remarkable loss of the ship in which he was a passenger, and the singular chance by which Frank had been the only survivor of the whole of the crew.

It happened that this merchant had been the principal owner of that ill-fated vessel, and wishing to learn all the particulars that were known previous to its loss, he had the curiosity to see Frank Coverley; and he wrote to him a request to that effect, which he forwarded to the address of Mr. Playfair, which had been given to him in the priest's letter.

Frank Coverley called on him, accordingly, and communicated to him all that he knew of the matter.

"Then you have not heard," said the mer-

chant, "what afterwards became of the vessel?"

"I have never heard of it since; but I always had a suspicion that the snake-like schooner, which had been hovering about us before we put off in the boat for fresh stock, had something to do with her loss. But I resided in the North for six years, and I have not been in the way of hearing any news of her fate."

"I will tell you, then," said the merchant, "a piece of news, which forms a tragical sequel to the story, and which adds to the remarkable character of your own escape. It is now about three years since, that a pirate vessel was captured by a king's ship, on the Brazilian coast. More than one act of piracy was proved against the crew, and the principals were hanged in due course at Jamaica. On board the pirate vessel, among other of their ill-gotten stores, was found a bucket, on which the name of the

'Sunderland' was painted. You are aware that it is not an uncommon practice on board ship to have the name of the ship marked on such articles, in order to prevent petty abstractions and disputes with other vessels when in harbour. The name, in this instance, was almost obliterated by wear, but it was still sufficiently distinct to be legible by the keen eyes that had to examine into the particulars of the captured pirate. Before the rascals were hanged, and when all chance of escape was, as they well knew, impossible, some of them confessed that they had taken the Sunderland, and after having removed from her every valuable article they could find, they bound the crew and scuttled the ship, so that every soul perished.

"It is supposed that the cook of their vessel wanting a bucket, took the one that was afterwards found on board the pirate, where it had remained unobserved, or disregarded as a thing

insignificant, till she was captured, when its discovery led to the inquiries which revealed the fate of the long lost Sunderland. So you see we never know what is best for us. I dare say you regretted your wreck in the boat, and the loss of your property, as the most terrible calamity at the time that could befal you; but if you had remained on board, it is clear that you would have suffered the same horrible fate as those whom you left in the ship."

Frank Coverley interested the merchant, and an intercourse ensued which led him to a knowledge of Frank's circumstances, which he communicated in a confidential letter to the friendly priest, though without being aware of the object of his old correspondent in making the inquiry.

It was a few weeks after this, that he wrote a note to Mr. Coverley, advising him to call on a gentleman whom he named, who would communicate the object of the interview at the

meeting. A little wondering what could be the reason for the cautious mode of the introduction, Frank Coverley attended, and after some general preliminary observations, his new acquaintance, to his great surprise, said to him—

"I understand from my friend that you are not engaged in any particular employment at present; would it suit your views to be connected with a newspaper?"

"In what way?" asked Frank, his heart giving him a great bump like a cannon ball.

"I mean as editor; but it would be necessary for us first to have some experience of your capability."

"What would you wish me to do?"

"You have not been accustomed to write for a newspaper—I mean those articles which are technically called leading articles?"

"I never wrote one in my life."

"So I understood;—nor have you ever taken any side in politics."

"I never had occasion; but, in truth, I fear I should be a bad partisan on either side. My habits of thought lead me to independent opinions."

"That is just what we want; and, indeed, it was because I was given to understand that you had never been mixed up with newspapers nor politics, that I have been led to make this proposal to you."

Frank waited with no little anxiety for what he would say next.

"If the duty would be agreeable to you, I can make you the offer to receive your articles on the usual weekly engagement."

"I should be happy to receive such an appointment in any shape," said Frank; "but, I presume, I should not be expected to write for a party?"

"As I said before, the object is, that you should write independent of either party; though I may venture to say, that, as a public

writer, it would not be long before you would feel yourself irresistibly led to write for the party with whose principles your own opinions generally coincided. But, understand, there is no restriction on you, beyond those cautions of general moderation and forbearance, which will naturally suggest themselves to you, when you consult the files of the paper in which your articles are to appear."

"With that understanding, I shall be most happy to accept the employment."

"Observe—the engagement is weekly; and there is no positive promise made to appoint you editor—that must depend on circumstances. The remuneration which I am empowered to offer you is but small; but it is as much as it is usual to give under the circumstances; it is five guineas a-week."

"I am quite content with it."

"Then you can begin to-morrow morning. Good morning to you."

"Good morning," said Frank.

"Good morning!" repeated Frank, to himself, as he left the house; "upon my word—what a cool old gentleman! But am I quite sure that I'm awake? Let me give myself a shake! There's the door that I came out of; and here I stand, the identical Mr. Frank Coverley that I went in. No—not exactly identical; for now I am become one of the fourth estate! I wonder the people don't make way for me to pass! They little think how I can cut 'em up! Wont I write stingers! But what the deuce shall I write about? I wish I could find out old Seedy; he's just the man to help me now. What can have become of him for the last six months? But what shall I write about? There's the rub?"

"My dear Frank," said Clara, when he got home; "what is the matter with you? You pace up and down the room like a madman."

"What shall I write about?"

"The poor children are quite frightened; you have not noticed them."

"What shall I write about?"

"Look at poor little Frank, waiting to shew you his new book."

"Hush—I've got a thought!"

"Be quiet, my darlings, your papa is thinking."

"No, I haven't.—Stop—don't speak. Put some paper on my desk. Cut it in slips.—So —there, that will do. Now don't speak a word—don't let anybody move. How do you think this reads, Clara?—

"'The awful crisis which has now arrived—and the imminent danger which hangs over this great nation, make it imperative on us to rouse—to rouse—to rouse the attention of our readers to the awful crisis.' No—that won't do—to rouse—how do you think it begins, Clara?"

"It begins very awfully."

"Suppose I begin: 'The crisis which has now arrived, is of a nature so awful'—do you think that reads better? A leading article all depends on the beginning."

"But what is this crisis that is so awful?"

"My dear Clara, the nation is always in a crisis when an editor thinks fit to say so. Stop—try this way: 'We have frequently taken occasion to call the attention of our readers to the awful crisis'—no—that wont do;—it would imply that our readers pay no attention to what we write, if we are obliged frequently to call their attention to it. Better begin this way: 'We feel sure that our readers and the public will be filled with the same feelings of alarm and horror as ourselves, when we lay before them the awful crisis'—I don't like that; 'laying an awful crisis before people' strikes me as not being a correct figure of rhetoric—a crisis comes of itself. Better as

at first; nothing like rushing '*in medias res.*' 'The awful crisis—'"

"But what is it all about; why should you put yourself in such a flurry about an awful crisis, when the dinner is waiting? I want to know what it is all about?"

"Ah! that's just what I don't know; but it begins well—don't you think so—just the thing to stir 'em up?"

"My dear Frank, what, in the name of Heaven, is the meaning of all this!"

"I'll tell you presently; don't interrupt me—never interrupt a flow of thought."

"But the dinner's waiting; and the children are hungry; can't the nation wait till you have done dinner?"

"Now this is dreadful! that a man should be disturbed in his sublimest imaginings by such a thing as dinner! But I do feel a little hungry myself; and I dare say it is from ex-

haustion that I cannot write so freely as I thought."

"To be sure it is; but don't you think you would write better if you were first to make up your mind what you were going to write about? But you haven't told me yet what all this sudden writing means."

"My dear Clara, old Seedy has often told me (I wish I could find out where that old fellow is!) that you can never get on that way. You must stick your pen on the paper and make it write away, and then the thoughts will come of themselves. But, upon my word, it's more difficult to know what to write about than I thought. Well, we will try after dinner."

"Why do you say 'we?'—have I anything to do with it?"

"My dear Clara, it's our style—editors' style. '*I*' is nothing. Just think, if we were to write '*I*'!—'*I*, Frank Coverley, think so

and so.' Who would care a brass button what Frank Coverley thinks? But the 'we' carries authority with it. Nobody can tell who 'we' is; it may be a dozen people, or twenty, or a thousand! That mysterious 'we' gives importance. Who can the 'we' be? says the be-articled public;—what a wonderful person 'we' must be!—how he handles the ministry! —how he chops down the opposition, right and left! The 'we' must be right; 'we' writes so positively—such knock-me-down arguments! Oh, the virtue of the 'we'! It is an abstraction—an invisibility—an awful mystery! If the public only knew the sort of person that sometimes dogmatises as the 'we' in a newspaper, it would terribly detract from that important personage's authority."

"Then, Mr. 'We,' as you are a 'we,' though I don't clearly understand what it is all about, sit down to your cold shoulder of mutton, and help Frank and Clara, and attend to the affairs

of the nation afterwards, or your own potatoes will get cold."

"To talk of cold potatoes at such a moment as this! Well, never mind; now I'll tell you all about it."

The good news which Frank communicated, added a relish to their frugal meal, and Clara, in the exuberance of her delight, sent the blade bone down to be broiled, to give a higher air to the repast. And for the remainder of the evening she had little more to do than snuff her husband's candles, read his slips, listen to his explanations, and hear him spout his article in every possible variety of attitude and declamation, till at last a piece of eloquence was concocted, which Clara declared to be, in her opinion, far above any oration of Cicero or Demosthenes, agreeing with her husband, that the style which he had adopted of declamatory argument, or argumentative declamation—for they could not exactly deter-

mine which term was best descriptive of his first essay—was decidedly his "forte."

Having come to this conclusion, they went to bed, Mr. Coverley repeating to his wife, several times before they went to sleep, his "argumentative declamation," or "declamatory argument," in his best style; and the poor lady was frightened in the middle of the night by being waked up by a sudden shouting, which she found proceeded from her husband, who, with his nightcap bolt upright, as if partaking of the excitement of the wearer, was declaiming with all his might, to the bed curtains, in an editorial dream.

It was not many weeks after this exhibition, that he was appointed editor, with a salary of five hundred a-year; and then he began to feel in earnest the laborious nature of the duties which he had undertaken. For the first month or two he got on very well; but he found that it was not an easy matter to continue writing,

day after day, and every day, without intermission. When the first enthusiasm had passed away, and he had exhausted his first flow of thought, he began to learn that, of all occupations, bodily or mental, the occupation of thinking is the most laborious and exhausting. And in his present employment, it was the necessity of thinking and of writing at least a certain quantity by a given hour, on subjects that often required the utmost stretch of thought, that made the task so formidable.

In the meantime, Mrs. Coverley found her family expenses increase, as the necessity arose for mixing in the general society in which her husband's position necessarily involved them. With that foresight of domestic economy, which women possess in so superior a degree to men, she prevailed on Frank to remove from the furnished lodgings which he had taken, and which were necessarily expensive, and rent unfurnished apartments, which she furnished

moderately, calculating that their means would be sufficient to pay the cost of absolutely necessary articles of furniture, and that after the first year, they would be able to lay by a portion of their income. All these arrangements Frank Coverley left to his wife, for he was too much absorbed in political questions and public meetings to be able to attend to matters comparatively so trivial as his household affairs.

In this manner, therefore, they went on—Frank Coverley going much into society, in order to keep his mind and information up to the level of the current tone and conversation of the day, and throwing himself, heart and soul, into his new career, which hardly left him time to speak or think on any matter but politics and literature, and the innumerable subjects immediately connected with his unceasing avocations.

But it was not long before he began to feel

that his income was barely sufficient to cover his expenses, and the struggle between scantiness of means and the exigencies of society, became embarrassing and painful. He suffered more than ever from the effect of the false position in society of a poor gentleman without adequate means to support his pretensions. Nor could he ever get rid of the distracting idea that his position and income were of the most precarious character, depending on the will or caprice of employers, whose interest in the paper for which he acted, might at any time cease, and give rise to new combinations and predilections.

In about eighteen months after his instalment as editor, the change which he feared, took place. Some of the proprietors who had been instrumental in his appointment, disposed of their shares in the paper, having other uses for the capital locked up in that investment, and the constitution of the new proprietorship

gave a majority of votes, which produced an immediate change in the conduct of the paper.

In a very short time, Frank Coverley received an intimation of the new course to be pursued, and of the decision of the new proprietorship, that a change in the politics, and necessarily of the editor of the paper, was determined on; and, in one week after, Frank Coverley again found himself suddenly without occupation and without an income, and with reason to lament, with tenfold bitterness, the hapless lot of a poor gentleman without a profession. At the same time, he received the news of the death of his friend, Mr. ——, whom he had accompanied many years before to Aix la Chapelle, and whose regard and friendship for him had remained firm and beneficial to the last. Lord —— had received a diplomatic mission to a foreign court, and his late acquaintance, the Brazilian merchant, had quitted the country on a voyage to South Ame-

rica, connected with his business. Frank Coverley found himself, therefore, alone, so far as regarded personal friends, although his general acquaintances were numerous.

"This is an unlucky blow," he said to his wife; "but courage! We must try again. I must stand by my motto—'Ne cede malis at contra audentior ito.'"

Clara sighed, and looked at her children. She tried to rally her spirits, but she could not. A gloom, which she could not shake off, overcast her mind—sad presentiment of sufferings to come!

## CHAPTER X.

"The visionary alchymists of old,
Tortured their lives to turn base lead to gold;
But all in vain! For after all their pains,
The only things they turn'd were their own brains!
But now the meanest wretch that wears a rag,
Without the aid of alchymy, can brag
That he can turn to gold e'en an old coat!
Thus, want brings with it its own antidote;
And a poor devil needs not fear starvation,
So long as he can go to ONE relation,
Who only asks, as proof of the connection,
That he will leave some *pledge* of his affection."

"MY UNCLE." *A Poem.*

FRANK COVERLEY, however, was not one to sit down with folded hands, and idly lament a condition which it had not been in his power to prevent; and the ties of wife and children were an

additional stimulus to exertion. But it was in vain that he tried every means to obtain some occupation that would give bread to his family. All avenues to a settled position seemed to be shut against him, and months rolled on without affording him any glimpse of the chance either of public or private employment.

But he did not remain idle. Amidst all the difficulties of penury and uncertainty, he proceeded steadily with the work which he had conceived; and as he read over page after page of manuscript to his admiring wife, hope would sometimes arise that he might be able to obtain an independent income by the exercise of his talents as an author; and although he had the warnings of the "veteran of the press," who had so vividly described the labours and the uncertainties of a literary career as the means of subsistence, he thought it right, in the absence of all other employment, to bestow his time on the completion of a literary work.

But this labour occupied many months; and in the meantime, his slender means gradually became less and less, till at length the want of their daily bread came upon them with all its horrors; for, with all her economy, poor Clara found herself without the means of meeting the weekly house expenses. Their rent was already considerably in arrear; but that was a matter that did not press like the difficulty of getting the daily food for their children.

They had already been obliged to dispose of their small supply of furniture, and had retired to humble lodgings, on the second floor of an obscure street. They lived on very little; but although people can live on very little, it is a difficulty that has never yet been surmounted, for people to live on nothing; and such was the problem in social life which Frank Coverley was called on to solve.

It was one evening that they were sitting

together; the children had been put to bed by Clara, for they had not the means of supporting a servant—when the maid of the house brought up that terrible little bit of paper, the aspect of which is so frightful to the man without money, inscribed with those significant letters—"Mr. Coverley, *Dr.* to John Rusk, Baker."

"Is the man to wait?" asked the maid-servant.

"Tell him to call to-morrow morning; Mr. Coverley is busy writing just now," said Clara.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Please, ma'am," said the maid, returning, "the man says he has called twice before, and it's a trouble to call again."

"Tell him to come up," said Frank.

"Oh, Mr. Rusk, I am sorry that you should have the trouble to call twice about such a trifle. What is it? Three pounds seventeen

and sixpence. If you will take the trouble to call once more, to-morrow morning at twelve o'clock, I will pay it with pleasure."

"Certainly, sir. I shouldn't have troubled you, but it has been running on now some weeks, and I have a bill to make up; and it's not usual to give credit to lodgers."

"An excellent rule, I dare say; well—you can always receive your money when you please. I will go out to-morrow morning and get some change to pay you, and you may be sure of finding me at home by twelve o'clock."

"Oh, sir, any time will do. I have a bill to make up, or I would not trouble you. At twelve o'clock, sir, to-morrow; I shall be sure to call, sir. Good evening, ma'am; hope your children are quite well, ma'am. At twelve o'clock to-morrow!"

"Genteel people?" observed the baker to the maid of all work, in a fishing way.

"Most genteelest people as can be," replied

the maid—"it was only the other day the lady gave me half-a-crown."

The worthy baker felt as if a sack of flour was removed from his breast at this satisfactory information, and it was observed that his bread was lighter than usual next day.

In the meantime, Frank and Clara remained in silence for a short time, the ominous bill lying on the table between them; but as misfortunes, according to the old proverb, never come single—though at that time he was not in a humour to enter into the philosophical reason of that phenomenon—the baker's bill presently had a companion.

The panting maid, breathless from her toilsome ascent from the regions below, brought in another piece of paper, and, without speaking, placed it in Mrs. Coverley's hands, and disappeared. The lady took it in silence.

"It is the bill for the rent, my dear."

"I suppose so—what is it?"

"Three weeks, at a pound a week, that is three pounds; and various little items, twelve and sixpence more."

"That is three pounds twelve and sixpence, and three pounds seventeen and sixpence—which makes," said Frank, with great composure, "seven pounds ten."

There was a pause.

"It must be paid," said Frank.

Clara looked inquiringly.

"It must be paid.—Do you know, Clara, that I have a rich relation, whom I never told you of?"

"My dear Frank, what do you mean?"

"Perhaps you don't know that I have a rich uncle; indeed, I may say, many uncles in this vast city."

"Good Heavens! Frank, what is the matter with you?"

"Don't be alarmed, Clara, my uncle is not an ideal being; but a real and substantial

person; and what is more, he takes a pleasure in lending money to people."

"But why have you never told me of this relation before? Dear Frank, there is something in your countenance that frightens me."

"In one word, then, my dear Clara, that charitable uncle who is so fond of assisting people with loans of money, is—can't you guess?"

"Tell me at once."

"Is, my dear Clara, that very useful character called a pawnbroker!"

"You would not like to go into a pawnbroker's shop to pawn things," said Clara, reddening at the humiliating idea.

Frank raised his hand, and pointed to the adjoining room, where their two children were sleeping.

Clara understood the sign. "Yes; for them I could go myself, anywhere; but it is very dreadful."

"I will go at once," said Frank; "better go in the dark than by daylight. My watch and chain will fetch something."

"There's my gold chain," said Clara, "and my bracelets—and several little things."

"No, Clara; not your little ornaments."

"Better, Frank; because, as I don't wear them, they will not be missed; but if you part with your watch, it may be suspected."

"True. Well — perhaps that will be best."

"Make haste back," said Clara; "I shall feel quite nervous till I see you again."

While he was absent, Clara sat by the side of her children.

"There—Clara—did I not tell you what an admirable relation I had? There's eleven pounds four shillings! Now we are rich! Nothing like an uncle! He's the relation to stick by you! Deserted by all the world, you can always fly to your uncle."

"My dear Frank, don't talk so; it sounds quite horrible."

"Well, dear Clara, I will say no more about it. I feel all the horrors of this terrible resource for the wretched. But that's done for the present; now for a vigorous effort, and in another week I shall have completed my book, and then we may be better off. Who knows, there may be some luck in store for us yet?"

The next morning found Frank Coverley early at work; and he was congratulating himself at breakfast, on his successful progress, and was in unusual good spirits, encouraging little Frank and Clara to be rather boisterous in their gambols, when a knock at the door announced a visitor.

"Come in," said Frank.

"It's a gentleman," said the maid, hesitatingly, "and he wants to see you."

"Say I'm at breakfast; but if the gentleman is in a very particular hurry, pray let him come in," said Frank, who was in high good humour.

"Servant, sir," said a stout good-humoured looking man, of whose countenance Frank thought he had a faint remembrance—"servant, sir. Sorry to disturb you so early, sir, but business is business."

"And pray," said Frank, "what is your business?"

"I'm come about that matter of Huntham and Skinnom; but the lady," said the man, looking at Frank and winking, "the lady——"

"Oh:—Clara, my dear, just go into the other room for a minute."

"That's best, sir; women can't bear these things sometimes, and go off in skerricks, as is natural enough—cos, of course, they can't be expected to understand business."

"Well—and pray what is your business?" asked Frank, some misgivings seizing him, from the style and manner of the man.

"It's the affair, you know, of Huntham and Skinnom—the money you owe 'em. In short, sir, as you're a gentleman as understands business, I may as well tell you, without more circumbendibuses, I've got a writ—that's it."

"A writ! What—where—must I go?"

"I suppose you would like to go where you would be comfortable and snug for a day or two, till you make up your mind what to do. There's Spunge's, in Bar Court, in the lane—that's Chancery Lane, where you would be just as comfortable as at home—and there's always the best of company there—all the tiptop gentlemen like it better than any other."

"What is the amount, pray?" said Frank, recovering a little from the first shock.

"Here it is"—displaying a long slip of

paper tattooed with diabolical marks—"one hundred and fifty-five pounds—no shillings."

"Couldn't you wait a little?" asked Frank Coverley, wishing to have time to collect his thoughts and consider what to do under the novel circumstances, and the thought of Clara to be left unprotected, and his children without the means of subsistence, burning in his brain.

"Happy to do anything that's reasonable; nobody can say that Joe Gripe behaved ungenteelly to any gen'leman; but if you are to be locked up, better do it at once; it saves lots of shrieking and that."

"Well, I will just prepare one or two things, and then I will be ready to go with you."

"You'll go to Spunge's, I suppose?"

Frank briefly explained to Clara—and it was not a matter that required many words—

what had taken place. She received it with wonderful calmness, but the deadly paleness that overspread her countenance was frightful to look at.

"We must live," she said, "for our children."

"It may not be so bad," said Frank, wishing to inspire her with a hope which he did not feel himself; "this may be done by those people only to frighten me into some act or admission which they require for the more secure possession of my late father's estate. I dare say I shall be able to make some arrangement."

"Write down the name of the place exactly where they are taking you," said Clara.

He wrote it down.

"Now, sir," said Gripe, "if it's all the same to you, we must be moving; business wont wait, sir, for no man."

"Stay," said Clara, "a moment.—Frank, I cannot part from you—let me come too?"

"But the children, Clara."

"The children! I had forgotten them! Good God! I had forgotten my children!"

Her words were thick, and scarcely articulate: it was plain that a terrible struggle was going on within, which almost choked her. Her eyes were wild, but her features retained their frightful calmness, with a paleness which seemed not to belong to a living person. Frank was alarmed; he felt her hands—they were deadly cold; the shock seemed to have suspended all her faculties—all but one—for she kept fast hold of her husband with the rigid grasp of the dead, while her open mouth and distended lips gave her the appearance of one suddenly stricken with a death-blow.

The little children regarded, with infantine wonder and a strange terror, the scene before them. They did not speak, but stood gazing at their parents, and holding each other's little hands.

"My dearest Clara, rouse yourself, and be calm. We must bear, what cannot be helped, with courage and fortitude. In a day or two at furthest, I dare say I shall return. Gather up your courage, my dear Clara, for your children's sake!—our children!"

"Now, sir," cried the impatient Mr. Gripe; "we really can't wait here all day, losing business!"

The sound of the man's voice struck on Clara's ear, and, rousing her paralysed senses, awoke her to a sense of what was passing; at the same time her husband made a movement to disengage her hands, and with a scream of agony, which would have made its way to any heart but that of an agent of the law, she sank senseless on the floor. The children, seeing their mother fall, screamed with terror, and Gripe, guessing what had taken place, opened the bedroom door without ceremony.

"Now, sir—now's your time! While the

lady's in a faint, you can cut away, and when she comes too, it will be all over. Quick, sir, make a start! the gal of the house will see to her."

"My God! you would not be such a brute as to leave a woman in such a state! She will die!"

"Lord love ye!" said Gripe, "women don't die of these things; they only shriek and kick about a bit, and then they give in to it as nice as ninepence. But here's another gentleman; a friend of yours, sir?"

Frank turned his head, and beheld an elderly man of a mild countenance and gentlemanly aspect. He was about to ask him the reason of his appearance, when the stranger addressed him:—

"I beg pardon," he said, "but I could not leave the house without inquiring if any accident had happened. I was attending a patient in the room below, when I heard a cry and a

fall, which my experience told me could have been occasioned by no ordinary cause."

The prepossessing air of the stranger at once won Frank's confidence. He pointed to the prostrate form of his wife in the next room.

"Look there!" he said.

The physician, without reply, immediately stepped forward, and, with Frank's assistance, placed the afflicted lady on a couch in the bedroom.

"Lock the door," he said, to Frank. "Don't let that brute come in. Dash her face with cold water—use the water freely. Your wife, I presume?"

"Yes; and those are my children."

"Poor little things! it is a world of sad trouble. Give me the jug of water. She is coming to. And now, sir, if you can have confidence in me, leave your wife to me and the maid of the house. I know your visitor, and

I guess the cause of this. You had better, sir, retire, lest your wife should relapse at the sight of you into another convulsion."

"To whom am I indebted," asked Frank, "for this opportune kindness?"

"There is my card; I will come to you, and tell you how your wife is. There is a knock at the door; it is the maid; let her come in. And now, sir, if you must go, let me advise you to go at once. We cannot expect fortitude from a woman; but a man, sir, must shew on these occasions that he has nerve. Go; I will not fail to call on you in the course of the day."

Frank kissed his children, who clung to him; and then he kissed his poor, unconscious wife; and shaking the physician by the hand, and promising the blubbering maid of all-work, that he would recompense her liberally, if she would pay attention to his wife and children in his absence, he left the house, and proceeded

to Chancery Lane, Mr. Gripe walking behind him at a convenient distance.

So escorted, in a short time he reached that preliminary entrance to the hell of a debtor's prison—a lock-up house; being, like purgatory, an intermediate place of sojourn for those waiting to be removed to another place, with this difference—that in the former case, the lodgers are waiting to go to heaven, and in the latter, debtors are waiting to be utterly damned in the infernal dungeons of torture provided for its victims by a debtor's prison.

It was not long, however, that Frank remained in that comparatively easy abode. In the course of the day he was visited by the friendly physician, who assured him of his wife's recovery to consciousness, and promising to pay attention to her, and to communicate with Frank daily on the subject, till her perfect convalescence. While the physician was still talking, Mr. Playfair's head clerk arrived, to whom

Frank had sent a special messenger. The clerk had called at the office of Huntham and Skinnom on his way, and with professional bluntness, he told Frank that there seemed to be no chance of entering into any present arrangement; they insisted on their money, and would listen to nothing but the payment of the whole sum due. Under such circumstances, he advised Mr. Coverley to get himself removed without delay to the Fleet or the King's Bench, as his residence at a lock-up house would soon run away with the little funds that he possessed.

Acting on this advice, and with the desire to save his money for the maintenance of his wife and children, although, to his own personal humiliation, he was removed the next morning, by the usual legal process, to the Fleet prison.

## CHAPTER XI.

"Of all afflictions man has suffered yet—
The hardest surely is to be IN DEBT!"
"LIFE." *A Poem.*

"NOT been in before?" asked the officer, affirmatively, under whose care Frank Coverley was being conveyed to prison.

"No."

"Thought so, by your looks; people pull a bit at first; but you get used to it in time. You need not walk so fast; it's not often that a man is in a hurry to get in—nor to get out sometimes, for that matter. There was one man in for twenty-seven years; his creditor

owed him a grudge, and when he had got him in, he swore he would keep him there till he rotted. But he died at last—that is, the creditor—and if he is locked up in a place that I wont mention—why, it would be serving him right, that's all I can say."

"And what became of the prisoner after that?"

"The executors of his creditors let him out. But he had been in so long, that, Lord bless you! when he got out he did not know what to make of himself. All the people that he had known were either dead or dispersed, and so the poor old man wandered about the streets till night, when he came back to his old room again. But he didn't live long; two or three weeks afterwards he fell down dead in the street, in a sort of fit,—over excited, the doctor said. But here we are, and I hope you will get well through it, sir, for it's a hard thing to be shut up in prison for debt; and I'm sure I never

knew it do anybody good, debtor nor creditor. This way in, sir, if you please."

Frank Coverley had to wait in the lobby a short time, while his name was enrolled in the list of unfortunates kept by the head turnkey, and to allow the officers of the prison to take a survey of his person. That process being concluded, he stepped forth into the prison yard.

He expected to see a scene of desolation and mourning, and he was surprised to behold various groups of well-dressed and ill-dressed persons promenading cheerfully up and down, reading the newspapers, and conversing with every appearance of gaiety and unconcern. He was inclined to think that he had made some mistake, and had got into the wrong place; but his doubts were presently dissipated by an unexpected greeting.

An individual, who was one of the gayest of the throng, and whom Frank Coverley had

observed exceedingly busy in the yard, bustling about, talking to every one, borrowing newspapers, and laying down the law, seemingly, on various points, approached the little flight of steps near which the new comer was standing in sorrowful mood, and accosted him as an old acquaintance.

"Mr. Coverley! how do you do, sir? Glad to see you, sir. Wish to find out any one here? Happy to shew you his room. Charming weather!"

Frank could not avoid being considerably struck with the appearance of his interrogator, and he fancied that he had a faint recollection of his features. The man of the Fleet was dressed in a thin and scanty dressing-gown, with an open collar which allowed of the display of an immense quantity of black hair copiously intermingled with grey. On his head he wore a hat, the crown of which was ingeniously sewed to the main body—albeit

that it presented rather an incongruous appearance, from its having originally belonged to a hat of another colour. His feet enjoyed the easy luxury of slippers instead of shoes, and a long tobacco-pipe, in a high state of activity, gave evidence that he was enjoying the comfort of that soothing and exhilarating companion with considerable satisfaction. The application of his hand to the bowl of his pipe, to coax the tobacco to a livelier glow, gave Frank the opportunity of observing a gorgeous-looking ring, surmounted by a sort of stone of a red colour, which adorned the forefinger of the smoker. From that his eyes wandered to where the opening of the dressing-gown disclosed the presence of the upper ends of a waistcoat, which the strong stretch of a vivid imagination might picture as having once been velvet. Frank recognised it at once; and the form of the reporter whom he had met at the eating-house long ago, and whom he had tem-

porarily alimented by his story of a tiger, stood revealed before him.

Something like a smile appeared on his countenance, as he surveyed the strange figure —the type and specimen of a confirmed denizen of the Fleet. The smile did not escape the notice of the reporter.

"Glad to see you smile. Not often that people smile when they first come in here,—that is, if—if you are really enrolled a collegian. But who do you want to see?"

"I am inclined to think that, excepting yourself, there is not a single creature here whom I know the name of."

"Yes, there is, though; there is one, at any rate,—that is, if you don't forget your old acquaintance, Mr. Parr. We have had many a laugh at your pouring out the bottle of ink the day when——"

"Mr. Parr here!"

"To be sure he is. I will shew you his

room, if you like. But first come and look at the back yard; perhaps he is walking there."

They had turned the corner of the huge building, in their way towards the back, when the reporter spied the individual of whom they were in search, who, with a pipe in his mouth, was smoking, and talking with a portly-looking person standing with his back to them.

Frank Coverley stopped; there was something about the look of that old black coat which reminded him of a former acquaintance. No: he could not be mistaken! That excess of rustiness, that ample collar, and those capacious flaps, once seen could never be forgotten. He hastened on, and in a few moments found himself in company with Mr. Parr and Mr. Seedy! The reporter joined them, and, uniting his pipe to theirs, made a triangular congregation of smokers, Frank completing the square.

There was a little embarrassment at first in

Mr. Parr's manner, but the veteran Seedy greeted Frank with a nod, as if his appearance in such a place was no more than might naturally be expected. The reporter broke silence:—

"A new member of the college. Mr. Coverley, I see you are acquainted with Mr. Seedy; I must make you acquainted with the ways of the place; lots of fun here, sometimes, Mr. Coverley!"

"Sorry to see you here," said Mr. Parr, taking the pipe out of his mouth, and shrouding himself immediately in a dense volume of smoke.

"You must try and make yourself as comfortable as you can," said Seedy, speaking from one side of his mouth, his pipe continuing to occupy the other; "it's of no use to fret; what can't be helped must be borne patiently."

"I must find some place for him to sleep

in to-night," said the reporter, good-naturedly; "I don't suppose I can find him a room, the place is so very full. Couldn't he go in the room next to you, Parr?"

"Oh! don't put him there; it's under the dancing-master's, and he would be annoyed to death with his fiddle and his capers."

"A dancing-master!" said Frank Coverley. "What sort of a man is he?"

"He's an oldish man," said the reporter; "I dare say he has been a good one in his day, but he is rather stiff in the gabs now. But he fiddles away, and cuts capers in his little room sometimes, as merry as a lark."

"I should very much like to see him," said Frank.

"You can easily do that," said the reporter; "I'll shew you up."

Mr. Parr said, "I shall see you again?" Seedy nodded his head, without taking the pipe from his mouth, and Frank followed the

reporter to the room of the dancing-master, whom he could not help suspecting was his old acquaintance of Gray's Inn Lane.

They knocked at the door.

"Knock louder," said the reporter; "he is playing his fiddle, and can't hear you."

"I do not want anyting at all," said a voice from within, which Frank instantly recognised; "I say I do not want anyting at all, and I wish you go away."

"It's an old friend," said Frank, raising his voice, "come to see you."

"Entrez," said the dancing-master, drawing back a bolt—"come in. My God!" he exclaimed, when he caught sight of Frank Coverley's face, and speaking rapidly, in his own language—"it is his countenance! But, Monsieur Coverley!—he is dead!—drowned!—perished in the sea! Speak! who are you, who come in the likeness of my lost friend? Speak, I say!"

He raised up his arms, with his fiddle in one hand, and his bow in the other, in an attitude of uncontrollable amazement, and when Frank Coverley answered—

"I am Frank Coverley, your old friend, who was supposed to have been wrecked in the lost ship. But I was saved, and here I am alive, as you see, and glad to see my old friend once more;"

The poor old man dropped his fiddle and his bow, (the reporter picked them up, and essayed his skill in an extempore voluntary, which produced a horrid accompaniment to the little dramatic scene,) and, after the continental fashion, put his arms round Frank's neck, and hugged him closely.

"Thank God!" he said, "that you are alive. But how is this? are you, also, another victim to the savage English laws for debt? Why are you here?"

Frank told him, briefly, the cause of his incarceration.

The old man grieved sadly.

"I am old," he said; "and it matters little to me where I end my miserable days. But you are still young; you have not yet reached the prime of life. To shut you up here is cruel! What good can it do to any one to imprison a man because he has no money?"

Frank was glad to make the old man's room his resting-place for the night. He hired a couch, which he caused to be conveyed to the Frenchman's room. He was restless and feverish; but he was little aware that he was seized with a serious malady, caused by the sudden shock of his arrest, and the congestion of blood upon the brain, produced by his stifled emotion and dark despair at leaving his wife struggling with illness, in a

hired lodging, and dependent on strangers for care; and his children already made orphans, by the tyranny of the law, which had deprived them of their parent's protection.

But his cup of misery was not yet full.

## CHAPTER XII.

"Deprived of all—without a home—
Condemn'd within these walls to roam!
Despised, neglected, lost, a slave—
My only refuge is the grave!"

THE DEBTOR.

IT was a few weeks after Frank Coverley's incarceration in the Fleet, that two practitioners of the law held the following dialogue:

"We have made a damned good job of this Coverley affair," said Huntham to Skinnom. "It has been a long suit; and who the devil would have thought of that old fox Snatchitt

trying to chouse us out of the bond! We were fools, after all, you see, to let young Coverley have that money."

The appearance of the individual who uttered this characteristic address was somewhat changed since his last introduction. He had grown enormously fat; and his swollen bulk exhibited a plethoric superfluity of bloated flesh, as if the blood and marrow of innumerable victims of the law, sucked dry by his leech-like voracity, had become absorbed in the capacious maw of his unsightly body.

The form and figure of his associate retained all its sleekness; his bald, benevolent-looking head, softly reposing above the folds of that meek-like white cravat, setting defiance to all systems of craniology, had become a little more shiny, and his tongue a little more oily even than it was wont to be in former time; for while the ill-gotten wealth extracted from the tortures of the unfortunate had rendered the

overbearing Huntham more arrogant and insulting, it had infused into the unctuous Skinnom a further portion of insinuative softness. But both were equally extortionate, and had become, by riches and practice, bigger rascals, if possible, than they were before.

"What fools we were," repeated Huntham, "to let that young Coverley have the money. Damn it! we might have done him without it."

"But it has cost a terrible deal of hard swearing," replied Skinnom; "such an expense! What we should have done without that last witness, I'm sure I don't know! The ferreting out of that man was quite providential."

"He was a damned prime one, that chap! A perfect paragon of a witness! And such a respectable-looking man, too!"

"He was a little bashful at first," said Skinnom, "and modest—as great men are;

but he was not aware, himself, of his capabilities, till I drew him out. And then, sir, he had such a memory! he could remember anything that was wanted!"

"We must keep him in sight; we may want him as a witness in some other case. How he puzzled old Playfair, eh? Curse that fellow! But this man—this Coverley—what can we do with him?"

"Would it do to let him out, and see if he could scrape up the money any way?"

"No use—damn him; he will never do any good. He has tried all sorts of things, and has failed in everything. He has no steadiness; and, besides, he has no profession, so that he will always be living from hand to mouth, and always put to his shifts to live at all. And then—damn the fellow!—he must have a wife! What the devil! why couldn't he do without a wife to make a worse beggar of him?"

"A wife is a luxury," said Skinnom; "a poor man has no business with a wife. I wonder the legislature does not interfere with some enactment to prevent poor people from having wives. That ought to be left to the rich."

"That's no affair of ours. But, damn it, I am afraid this fellow Coverley will never have any money. What the devil to do I can't tell!"

"I am apprehensive," said the bland and saint-like Skinnom, "that we must write it off as a loss. But I wish, my dear Huntham, you would not swear so; it isn't moral, it isn't, really; and you're always talking of the devil —not that I believe in that nonsense—but when it comes on one suddenly, it makes one feel uncomfortable. Heaven has been pleased to bless us, my dear Huntham, with worldly prosperity, and as for that Coverley, we have him safe locked up."

"That's all we can do with him: upon my soul, the law is too lenient to debtors."

"Imprisonment for debt, however, is not without its use, sometimes," rejoined the amiable Skinnom. "When a man is deprived of liberty and air and exercise, and obliged to pawn his shirt to get a morsel of bread, and has nothing left but the stone walls to eat or knock his head against, and seeing, perhaps, his wife—that is, if he cares for her, which I have known sometimes to be the case—seeing his wife, I say, and his children, actually starving before his face, and himself taunted with reproaches for not paying money which he has not got, and which he knows he can never get inside a prison—that's something."

"It's not enough," said Huntham. "Damn me, I'd grind him between two stones to get the money. We must try if we can't put on the screw somehow, to squeeze the money out of him."

"His friends must come forward," said Skinnom; "he must have some friends. When he is pinched close, he will work them to death to help him out. Besides, the clerk tells me that his wife is very ill, and can't leave her bed to see him; so he will move heaven and earth to get at her."

"That's capital; and we may get our money. How very fortunate!"

"It's quite providential that they should be separated, husband and wife, this way; one locked up, and the other knocked up," said Skinnom, smiling complacently at his own facetiousness. "It may get us our money, when no other way would. But a virtuous action never goes unrewarded!"

"Now, Skinnom, don't;—upon my soul, I can't bear it. I do believe you would gammon St. Peter at the gates of heaven to let you in!"

(If he had said, that he would try to gam-

mon somebody else in another place to let him out, the observation would have been more appropriate—but it is wrong to anticipate.)

"Talking of heaven," resumed Skinnom, "I wonder where that old villain, Screwem, expected to go when he died. The sneak! to do us out of twenty per cent. of the sixty that he charged so long—only allowing us forty. The unconscionable old villain!"

"You were with him when he died?"

"Yes; I wanted to coax the old miser to remember me in his will; but he had been regularly flabbergasted by some methodist parson, that took the liberty to be very officious, and talked to him about his soul, as if the old rogue ever knew he had a soul!"

"And it was no go, eh?"

"No: I could have throttled the old beast for his obstinacy, and the parson too. All that I could get out of him was, 'Lord have mercy on my soul!"—that's what the parson

taught him. And the only rational thing he said was, that if he *was* to be punished in the next world for his sins in this, he wished he might be permitted to pay the penalties at once—I suppose he was thinking of his old trick of paying cash instead of taking credit—and then he mumbled out, in his hypocritical whine, that he hoped he would be allowed discount for prompt payment,—and so the wretch died."

"And a good riddance. And now lose no time in getting judgment and execution against Coverley, that we may have him hard and fast, and there we will keep him till he rots, if he don't contrive to bore his friends out of the money."

"Ay, ay—leave it to me;" and the mild and placid Mr. Skinnom immediately set about that agreeable duty with his usual characteristic suavity.

In the meantime, their victim lay ill, in the

Fleet prison, of a wasting fever; while his wife remained on her sick bed, exposed to all the horrors of the most appalling destitution. The excellent physician, who had accidentally become known to them, attended assiduously to both; but he could not conceal from Frank Coverley the alarming state of his wife's health.

"My dear doctor," he said, "I am sure she must be very ill, or she would be here. Tell me the truth. Anything is better than suspense!"

But the doctor was silent; and his silence spoke more than words.

"She is too weak," he said, at last, "to come to you; and I dare not allow her to be transported to this place. The shock of seeing you in this condition might be instantly fatal. I would not say thus much, if the necessity of the case did not oblige me. Is there no way for you to get out for a day?"

"It is not possible; I have learned some-

thing of the ways of this place. It is out of term, and there is no possibility of getting out, even for an hour."

"That is very sad, indeed," said the physician. "I am now going to see Mrs. Coverley,"—(he mused for a while,)—"and I will see you again in the evening—perhaps before."

He departed, and left his patient alone, in a stone arched cell, dignified by the title of a room, helpless, and almost worn out with disease and anxiety. Frank Coverley too surely guessed the cause of the physician's seriousness. He writhed himself on his sick bed, from which he was too ill to rise, and he was inclined to dash his head against the stone walls of his prison, in the horror of his despair, at the thought of his dying wife, whose last farewell was denied to him by the inexorable law of imprisonment for debt!

Mr. Parr frequently visited him; the good-natured reporter did his best to cheer him;

the poor old dancing-master tended him as his nurse—for the unfortunates there were kinder and more compassionate to one another than the world was to them—cheerfully sharing their precarious meals with those more wretched than themselves. The veteran of the press sat with him, and conversed, with philosophic composure, on the varying events of this changeful life:—

"It is what we must all come to—that is, most of us;—the Fleet and the King's Bench are the natural dwelling-houses of literary men; they seem to have been built on purpose for them. The world says, that literary men are extravagant and improvident, and that they fall into pecuniary difficulties from faults which deservedly lead to poverty and imprisonment. The real truth is, that literary men are neither more extravagant nor more improvident than other men; but they are always in a false position—the position of poor gen-

tlemen, without the means of maintaining themselves in the rank of society in which their pursuits, their tastes, and the public consideration places them. It is not like a man with a profession; then a man knows what he has to rely on; but a literary man does not;—his means are always fluctuating, according to the fluctuation of the public taste, or his own ability to write more or less, or better or worse. And it is a truth, that a man cannot save out of an uncertain income; especially when that income, as in the case of almost all literary men, is not more than barely sufficient to allow him to live in the 'respectable way,' as the phrase is, which society exacts. But I see you are too ill to discuss the question. Well—I will not tire you with my talk; I will tell the Frenchman to come to you. That is him, I suppose; some one knocking at the door. No; it is some stranger—he looks like an out-

landish parson—wanting to see you. Shall I let him in? I will leave you together."

Frank raised his eyes as he rested on his arm in his miserable bed, and beheld, to his amazement, the good priest of the Brazils!

## CHAPTER XIII.

"SPIRIT.

Dost mark that snow-white speck? And, sister, say,
Why does the freed soul linger on its way,
And float suspended between heaven and earth,
As loth to leave its place of mortal birth?

ANGEL.

'Tis she! I see the trace upon its brow
Of mortal sorrows which it felt below;
And now—though longing for its heavenly home,
It tarries for another:—See! they come!"

"THE ANGELS." *A Poem.*

IN a humble room of a second-floor in a lodging-house, lay a dying lady in the last stage of a brain fever, produced by the unutterable and unsupportable agony of separation

from her husband, who was lying sick in gaol. Two young children were the inmates of the same apartment, for her slender means would not allow of the convenience of a separate room. The whole appearance of the place spoke plainly that chilling poverty was adding the aggravation of its afflictions to the incorporeal tortures of the mind. The lady was alone, save her two children. The kind-hearted maid of all work did her best to administer to the comforts of the invalid; but there are but cold comforts in a lodging-house.

The lady, however, heeded them not. Her burning thoughts dwelt on the image of her husband pining in a prison; and on her helpless children, soon to be bereft, she felt, of that fostering mother's care which no other ministration can supply. And as her frenzied mind pictured all the phantasmagoria of wretchedness which wildness and delirium could conjure up, the apparitions of the future

misery in store for them, added fresh fuel to the fire in her burning brain, and she wept aloud in agony!

The little children trembled and cried. They took their mother's hand, and crept upon the bed, gazing on her with childish interest, and wondering that she seemed not to know them, or to regard them.

The door opened, and the maid of all work peeped in.

"Did you call, ma'am? Did your mamma call, dears? I am afraid the poor lady is very bad," she continued, to some one outside; "but here's the doctor. It was the lady, sir, shrieking out, I suppose, in her dilirerium, and I thought she was calling to me. And here's another lady, sir—a foreign lady, down stairs, a-talking to my missus about Mrs. Coverley."

As she spoke, a lady, tall and dark, and dressed with extreme plainness, presented herself to the physician's notice. Her large, dark

eyes were full of tears, as, with a foreign accent and in a troubled voice, she asked—

"Could one who takes great interest in the lady, be allowed to see her?"

"Are you a relation of the lady?" asked the physician.

"No; but—I am—" she hesitated for a moment—"a friend of her husband. I have learnt this day that she is in distress, and I am come—if she will permit me—to help her."

"She is very ill," replied the physician; "and I fear any sudden shock might be instantaneously fatal to her. I have taken care that she has not wanted for necessaries; but my own means, unfortunately, will not allow me to do all that I should wish. However, I have the satisfaction of knowing that she has not suffered from want of professional attendance. The poor lady has had the benefit of my services freely."

"It was very good of you," said the stranger.

"Her husband unhappily is confined in the Fleet—that is a prison for debtors, madam; and a great deal of Mrs. Coverley's illness has arisen from their forced separation, and her anxiety for her husband's health."

"Is Mr. Coverley, then," said the stranger, speaking with difficulty, "very ill?"

"As you are a friend of the family, madam, it is right that I should tell you that I have no hopes of his recovery."

The stranger burst into tears.

"I am grieved, madam, to give you this pain, but the danger is pressing and imminent, and if anything can be done, it should be done promptly, or it may be too late."

"I have already cared for it," said the stranger.

"Is there any hope of Mr. Coverley being released?" asked the physician; "because, in

that case, it would be better to prepare Mrs. Coverley, and to guard against the effect of a sudden surprise."

"Can I not speak to her?" asked the stranger.

"I will see," said the physician. "Sometimes joy produces an extraordinary effect—some revulsion of the system for which we cannot account. Be pleased, madam, to sit down for a minute in this room."

"Mrs. Coverley says she should like to see you," said the physician, returning. "She seems to know you, and she calls you Mrs. Ramsay."

"Be it so," said the stranger, reflecting for a moment; "so long as she will receive benefit at my hands, no matter from whom she supposes it to come."

So saying, the stranger accompanied the physician into the sick room of his patient.

Clara had raised herself up in bed, and

with anxious eyes was waiting to gladden her sight with the well-remembered countenance of the kind widow; but on the entrance of the stranger, she evinced her disappointment in tones of complaint.

"It is not Mrs. Ramsay! A stranger! What is this?"

"You know me not," said the strange lady, speaking in measured words, in a language which evidently was foreign to her; "You know me not, but I have known you long. Alas! I little thought to find you thus!"

She advanced nearer, and taking in her hand some of the dying lady's long and beautiful hair, which had escaped in wild disorder over her shoulders:—

"Yes," she said, "it is! Well do I remember it! These are indeed the tresses of Clara Lesley!"

A burning blush came over the face and neck of Clara, rendering deeper the flush of

fever which was consuming her sinking frame.

"And you!" she cried.

"I am Constanza!"

Clara sunk back on her bed. Even in death the shade of jealousy, which long since had been attached to that well-remembered name, resumed its power.

"And you are come," she muttered, "to see him again!"

"I am come, dear sister, to see you!—oh, how little did I think to see you thus!—to save you, if I can, and to save him!"

"Have *you*, then, seen him, when I cannot?"

"No, sister, it would not be meet for me to visit him; but the holy father, who is my guardian, and who has accompanied me to this country, is even now gone to visit him and to release him."

"To release him! Did you say, release him!" cried Clara, stretching out her arms,

and receiving Constanza to her bosom. "Oh, angel of goodness and mercy! Doctor, give me something, I am faint — something — I faint!"

"It is too much for her," said the physician; "leave her for the present."

But the dying woman held Constanza's hand fast clasped in her own. It was plain that she was sinking fast. The physician felt her pulse flutter under his finger; he knew that death-sign well; but still she kept, with rigid grasp, fast hold of Constanza's hand. She raised her eyes, and essayed to speak, but the powers of nature were spent; she was able to do no more than throw a last regard of love on her children, and then at Constanza.

Constanza understood the glance:

"I will," she said; "they shall be my children."

She felt a slight pressure of the hand, and then the hold became relaxed. All was still!

"Retire into this room," said the physician.

"No," said Constanza — "no rude hand shall close her eyes. Farewell, sister, there is another world, a better one than this. May God receive your soul!"

Weeping bitter tears, Constanza proceeded with her task. But now was heard a sound of many voices on the stairs, and the heavy tread of feet, as of men bearing up a burthen; and the priest appearing, announced that bearers were transporting the form of Frank Coverley—whose weakness was too great to allow him to walk—to take a last farewell of his dying wife.

"Alas!" said Constanza; "it is too late!"

"God's will be done!" said the priest, speaking in Latin; "this is a sad history!"

The men placed the couch on which Frank Coverley lay extended in an adjoining room;

and having been liberally paid by the priest, retired.

"Where is Clara?" said Frank, in a feeble voice. "This journey has almost exhausted me. I shall not have strength left to console her."

The priest brought to him his two children. —He kissed them, and blessed them.

"But now take me to Clara."

"My son," said the priest, "God has been pleased to spare your wife the agony of this meeting."

Frank sobbed convulsively.

"Her children are all that now remain to remind you of her who is now in heaven! Your duty to them binds you to the earth."

The physician advanced, and proffered his consolation.

"I beseech you," said Frank, "lay me by her side. Good father, I beseech you!"

"It is best," said the physician; "it will relieve his mind."

They laid him by the side of Clara. There was one other in the room, but she remained unseen.

"My poor Clara," said Frank, addressing the inanimate remains of her whom he had loved through life so fondly—"my poor Clara, we shall not long be separated, if—but no—I will not doubt! If the end of our being were here, why create us at all, to undergo our earthly suffering? But my poor children! — If I could only hope that some kind hand would be stretched forward"—he spoke more feebly—"to save them from their wretched fate, I could die in peace. But——"

His waning sight fell on the form of one who, once seen, never could be forgotten. The brilliancy and the voluptuousness of her beauty was gone—it had become sobered down by disappointment and bitter remembrances, to

meekness and resignation—but she was beautiful still; and as she mildly fixed her eyes on him, the whole scene of the ardent love of the Brazilian girl rushed on his mind.

"Constanza!"

"Frank Coverley! I am the Constanza—but I am now dedicated to Heaven, and my mission was to save you. It has pleased Him, in whose hands are life and death, to remove my sister—would that my prayers could prolong your life! But, at least, I can protect your children. Frank Coverley, I swear, before Heaven, that the welfare of your children shall be to me a sacred obligation."

The physician here interposed. He wished to try every chance of saving the life of his patient, though without hope of its being possible for his constitution to make a sufficient rally to prolong his life. The priest, and Constanza, who took charge of the children, remained in an adjacent room till a late hour

of the night. The physician also stayed, to be ready to give his help to improve a favourable crisis, should it take place. It seemed that the patient slept, and Constanza and the priest remained in anxious expectation, while the physician sat by the bedside.

The breathing of the dying man grew fainter and fainter. The physician observed that he had taken the hand of Clara in his own, and he would not disengage it, lest he should disturb the favourable crisis which seemed approaching. He listened, but he could no longer hear the breathing of his patient; he felt his pulse—it returned no sign; he held a glass to his lips—it was unsullied; he tried to disengage the hand of the lifeless form of the husband from that of his wife, but the grasp was firm, even in death; and there, hand in hand, lay the inanimate remains of Frank and Clara. They loved each other

through life, and in death they were not divided!—

The physician communicated the mournful intelligence, in a low whisper, to the priest and Constanza.

She arose; approached the bed of death; knelt down; and prayed. She kissed the forehead of each; and then taking the two children by the hand, she left the house.

"This is a sad end of a life of many afflictions," said the priest to the physician. "Manly strength and great talents, wasted and early lost! Society ought to contrive for its members better than this."

"It is a melancholy fate," said the physician. "Poor fellow! he has told me all the circumstances of his strange and eventful life; his reverses, his poverty, his struggles, and his broken heart. For when a man gets down in the world, he can obtain only such employ-

ments as others reject — forlorn hopes, as it were; and he becomes an agent in attempts to sustain some failing business, or some losing concern, which nothing can save from extinction. And then, as he fails in one thing after another —as he must fail in projects which may be said to be already failures before he engages in them—he is blamed by people for those unfortunate results, which, if the truth were known, he was the very means of protracting and of making less disastrous. If he had been able to direct the great energies of his powerful mind to some particular pursuit, the miseries which have brought him to this premature death might, perhaps, have been avoided."

But this is the evil, in the present state of society, of a man being without a profession.

THE END.

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